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JULY 1931

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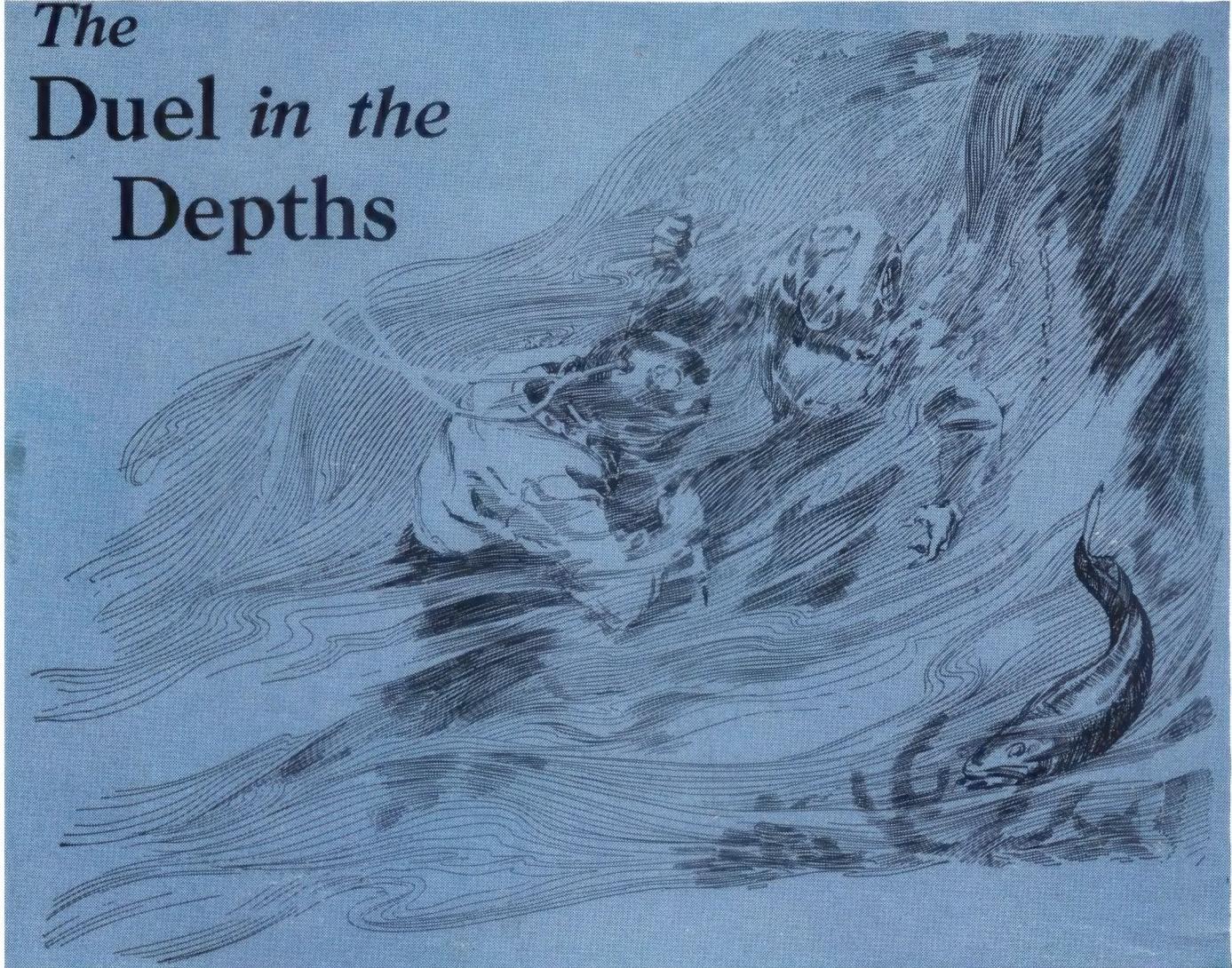
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EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS has achieved something specially fine in "The Land of Hidden Men," and the story increases in power with each installment. He will have notably good company next month in the stories by ARTHUR K. AKERS, CLARENCE HERBERT NEW, ELLIOTT WHITE SPRINGS and others.

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FREDERICK R. BECHDOLT writes a fascinating romance of the old West in "Youth Rides Victorious," which comes to a stirring crisis next month. And the modern West will be represented by a man who is at once a real cowboy, a vigorous writer and the premier Western artist of our time —WILL JAMES.

The August BLUE BOOK Magazine

The McCall Company, Publisher, 230 Park Avenue, New York.

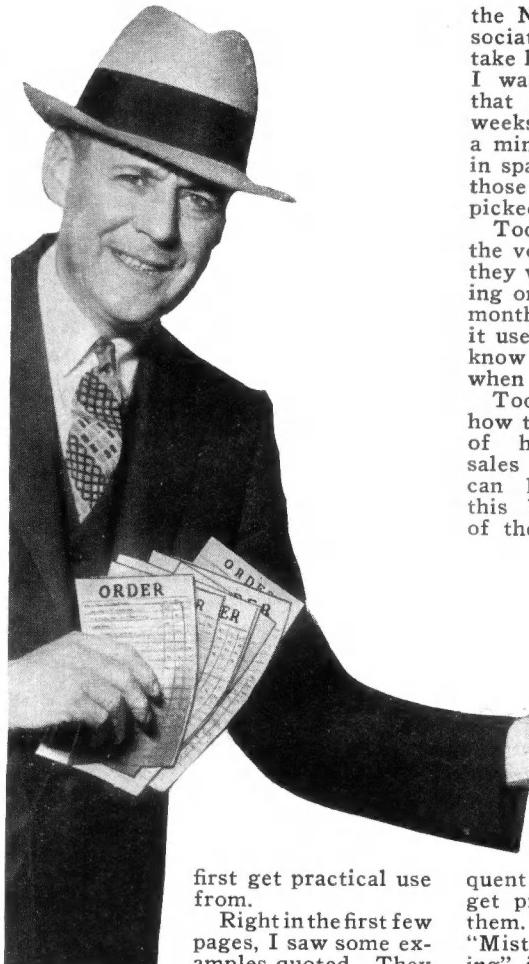
"I Saved Six Orders and Made \$90 in One Day . . . Thanks to This Pocket Volume!"

I'VE only been selling about a year. When I broke in, though I realized that trained salesmen are the highest paid men in the world, I expected the going to be hard at first. It was—a lot harder than I'd expected, even. At the end of six months I was commencing to get discouraged. I certainly hadn't made a flop of it—but I wasn't getting the results I should have had.

Naturally, seeing other fellows who started right with me go right ahead, I realized something was wrong. A particularly disheartening thing was the fact that at times I'd be right on the point of closing a good-sized order—and all of a sudden, it would go "flop." In fact, it kept happening all the time. I was doing something, I knew, that was killing those sales.

Finally I decided that I had to do something. I had been hearing a lot about National Salesmen's Training Association. But I'd never investigated them. Then, one day, I read one of their announcements. I was amazed to find how comprehensively they covered the training of salesmen. Furthermore, they announced that they were sending a most unusual volume, "The Key to Master Salesmanship" to ambitious men who asked for it—not only experienced salesmen, but men who had never sold, but wanted a chance in this highly paid field.

Naturally, I wrote for it—it seemed to me that here was the certain solution to the errors I had been making. Imagine my surprise—and interest—when they arrived, not only one book, but two. To this day I can't decide which of those books helped me most. The little book which I had not been expecting was just what I needed at the time. It was written for men just like me—men who had been plugging along in salesmanship—never successful, never so hopeless that they quit selling. And while "The Key to Master Salesmanship" gave me an insight into the real secrets of salesmanship, the other book, "Mistakes Commonly Made in Selling" was the one I could



the National Salesmen's Training Association could give me? It didn't take long to figure that one out, either! I was enrolled for the full training that same night; and the next two weeks saw my sales record soar. Not a minute of time lost—I studied just in spare hours, but I learned things in those spare hours that I'd never have picked up, just by my own experience.

Today, I find amazing increase in the volume of my sales now over what they were a year ago. Then I was selling only about 40% of my quota—this month, with a quota twice as high as it used to be, I'm 50% over! And you know what quantity production means when the bonus checks roll around!

Today any man who wants to see how to end some of his biggest sales weaknesses can learn from this book some of the most fre-



first get practical use from.

Right in the first few pages, I saw some examples quoted. They were things I had been doing every day. I'd never dreamed they were dangerous errors. The more I thought about them, the more clear it became, though, why I was having such difficulty with my closes. I thought to myself: "By golly, that's why Barnes decided to put off buying, this very afternoon!" I kept on thinking of men whose orders I had lost, through just that very mistake. There were six of them.

The next morning, I sallied out, bright and early to see if I couldn't save those sales, using the tips given me. Before noon, I had put the practical suggestions of that little book to work—and sure enough, in every case, I made the sale which I had thought was gone glimmering. Six sales saved—at \$15 commission apiece, that was \$90 made, by one morning's work, plus the advice of a little book that cost me nothing!

Of course, that set me to thinking. If that one piece of knowledge could make me \$90, how much would I make out of having all the knowledge which

quent mistakes which spoil sales, and get practical suggestions how to end them. Not a penny of obligation—"Mistakes Commonly Made in Selling" is now FREE to any ambitious man. At the same time we will send you, also free, the new and finer edition of "The Key to Master Salesmanship," which since its publication has been read by many men who have got into the biggest pay class of salesmanship. Write for both these valuable volumes now—the coupon will bring them by return mail.

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The BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

JULY, 1931

Vol. 53, No. 3

Two Impressive Serial Novels

The Land of Hidden Men	By Edgar Rice Burroughs	24
An American's extraordinary adventure in Cambodia—by the author of Tarzan.		
Youth Rides Victorious	By Frederick R. Bechdolt	54
The pioneer West is here vividly reproduced in a novel of great power.		

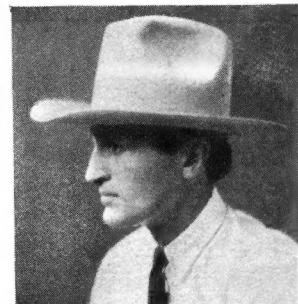


Photo by Curtis

WILL JAMES

HIS mother died when he was a year old. When he was four, his father was killed by a vicious steer, and the boy was left to the guardianship of a French-Canadian trapper. When Will was thirteen, the trapper was drowned—and since that time Will James has made his own way. As a cowboy and rodeo rider he has taken many hard knocks. He knows the cowboy's life, writes of it and illustrates it, as can no other living man. The first of his series "The Cowboy Today" appears on page 11. And he is now at work on a novel which will commence publication in an early issue of this magazine.

Spirited Short Stories

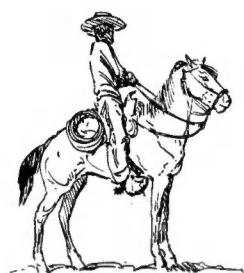
Black Terror	By Walter Wilwerding	6
A drama of wild-animal life in the African jungle.		
The Cowboy Today	By Will James	11
"Bronc's and Ropes" introduces a new series by our premier Western illustrator.		
New Tricks	By Captain Dingle	12
A scorned little gadget saves an old skipper and his storm-harried ship.		
Evangeline Scores	By Kingsley Moses	17
The royal game of polo and a swift-moving romance.		
Mystery Haunts the Storm	By Seven Anderton	38
The author of "Floptown Pearl" gives us a drama of the modern highroad.		
His Wonders to Perform	By Ewing Walker	44
A Southern sheriff tracks down a criminal after his own peculiar methods.		
Boss of His Shift	By Harold Channing Wire	51
An old hard-rock man comes to the rescue when calamity strikes.		
Too Much Mustard	By Arthur K. Akers	72
A saddle-colored Sherlock and his dark Watson achieve trouble and triumph.		
Free Lances in Diplomacy	By Clarence Herbert New	78
"The Man from Carpathia"—the defeat of a new assault upon European peace.		
A Soldier of France	By Armand Brigaud	86
IV—Campaigning with the Camel Corps.		
The Mills of God	By George Barton	97
VIII—"The Hatton Garden Robbery."		

A Complete Short Novel

The Flowing Road	By Don Cameron Shafer	102
Mystery and hazard along the wild upper reaches of the great Amazon.		

Prize Stories of Real Experience

Towed by a Brahma	By W. W. Graves	129
A Texan tells of his battle with a persistently pugnacious bull.		
Mistaken Identity	By Charles S. Dailey	130
An outlaw trapper mistook this surveyor for a game warden.		
Death at the Stick	By Conway Richardson	132
How it feels to have your pilot killed six thousand feet above the battle lines.		
Caught in a Log-Jam	By Gaspard England	133
His foot caught in a vise of logs, and the jam moving.		
Into the Old Shaft	By John H. Jollief	135
An Indiana coon-hunter falls down an abandoned mine shaft—into water.		



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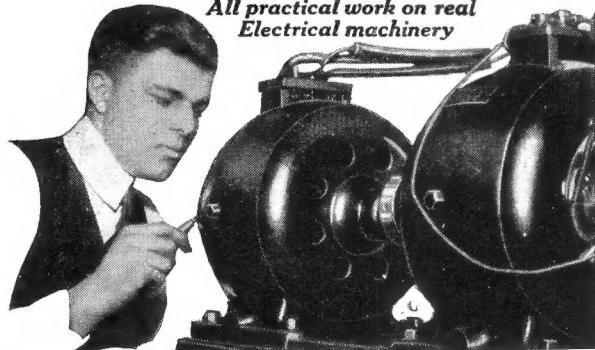
FRANCIS HUTTER, Secretary

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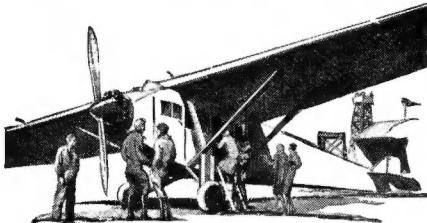
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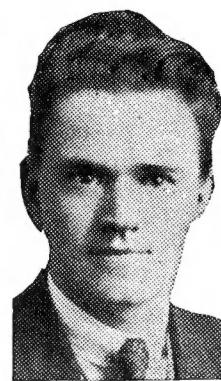


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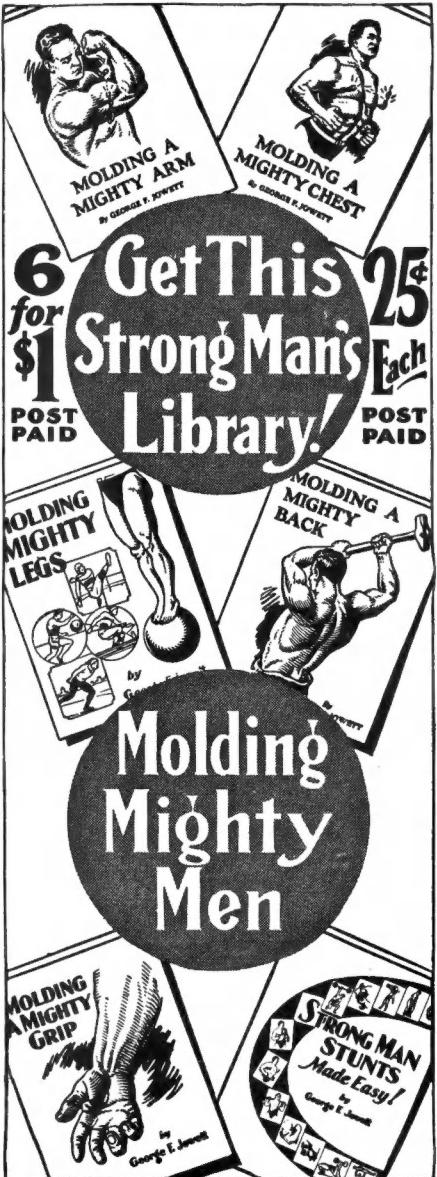
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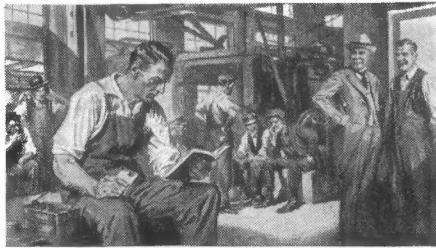
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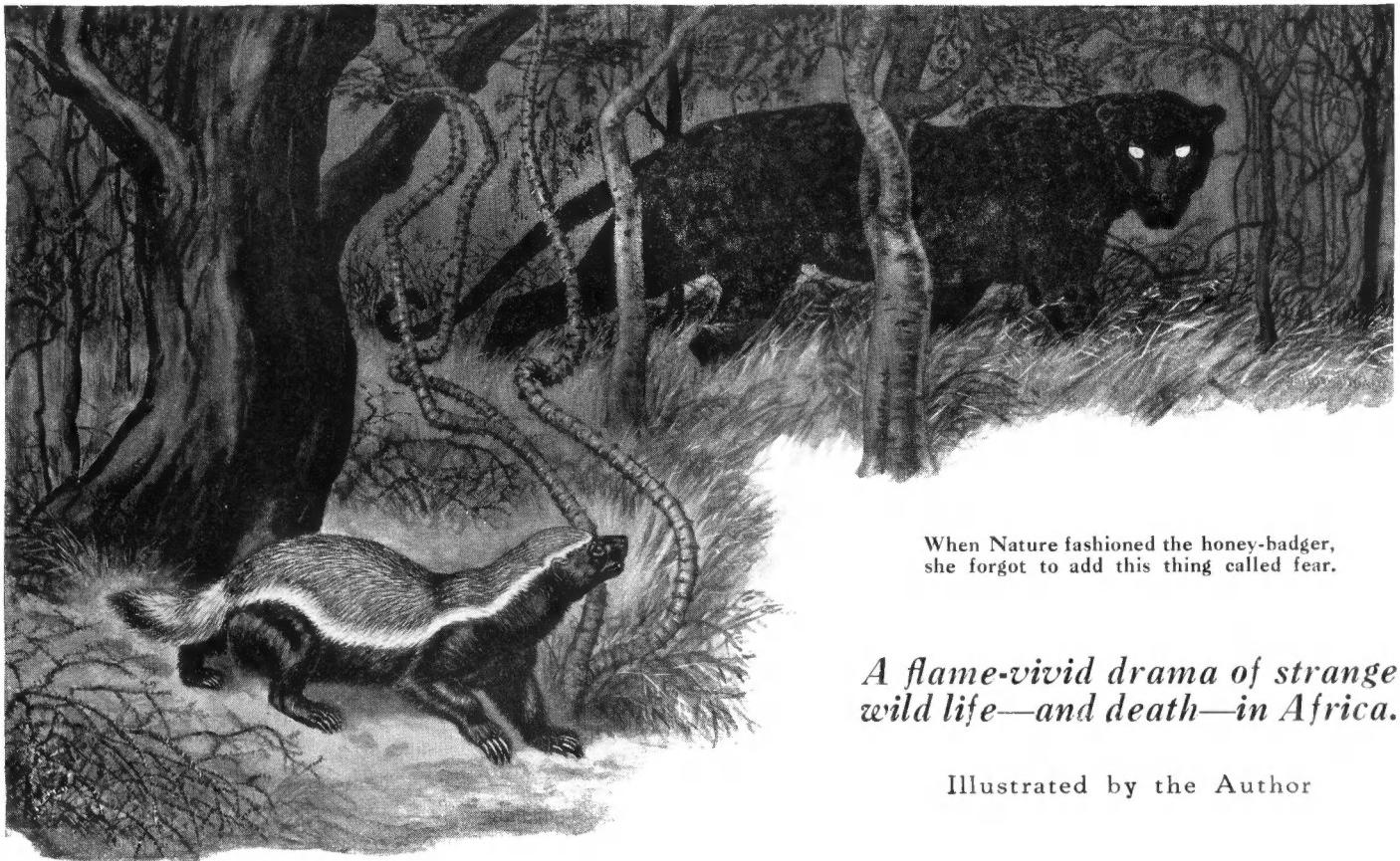
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When Nature fashioned the honey-badger,
she forgot to add this thing called fear.

*A flame-vivid drama of strange
wild life—and death—in Africa.*

Illustrated by the Author

Black Terror

By WALTER WILWERDING

A SCREAM—a sudden silencing of night sounds, as though this agonized call had turned bird and beast mute; and then the hurried beat of hoofs upon the dry parched earth. Shadows detached themselves from the deep shadows of the acacias that ringed the lake,—the only water-hole in miles,—and streaked for the open veldt as though demons pursued.

Ratel the honey-badger raised his squat form erect and gazed at these fast-moving shadows. One, two, three, four of them raced by, and then the count became confused as dozens separated themselves from the darkness of the trees and galloped swiftly after the first to take alarm.

The moonlight revealed that some of those fast-moving shadows bore the black and white stripes of the zebra clan. Others, who ran with a peculiar rocking gallop, bore horns on their heads which were twisted at an acute angle and set in a way that marked them as belonging to the kongoni tribe. Others, again, were bisonlike in appearance; and these last—the white-bearded wildebeest—had found their voices once more, for as they galloped away awkwardly, they called, “*Kwonk, kwonk!*” at the outrage of being obliged to retreat in this manner.

The last of them had dissolved into the dim half-light of the moonlit night before Ratel again resumed his way. And strange as it may seem, his way led him toward the very acacia grove that had disgorged this rout upon the veldt.

Some great and nameless fear had driven these others forth; but when Nature fashioned the ratel, she some-

how forgot to add this thing called “fear” to the conglomerate collection of short legs, squat, flat body, coarse fur and loose, leathery skin that man has also named “honey-badger.” It seemed as though she had for once run out of stock of this thing that protects but makes existence a nightmare for many lesser creatures, and so had added an extra dash of courage to make up for the omission. The result was a creature that was unafraid of either man, beast or devil.

He rolled or waddled or trundled along—or whatever you want to call that peculiar gait of his—and seemed absorbed in his own affairs: very important affairs, no doubt. Yet whatever these were, he appeared in no hurry. He went down the game-trails that these others had followed to water, until of a sudden he stopped under the trees, with hair of back and tail all a-bristle, and moved his head swiftly from side to side. A low hiss came through set teeth as he tested the air carefully. Before him a dark blotch was slowly soaking into the earth, and the signs told plainly that a struggle had taken place.

Yet here lay no dead beast. No jackal or hyena lurked near awaiting the pleasure of some king of the jungle. No bloody trail led into the bush, to show where some deadly beast of the night had dragged his meal.

There were the game tracks down to the water; there were the deep marks of frantically scrambling hoofs; there was the dark, sticky warm blotch upon the torn and trampled ground, and that was all.

Plain it was, indeed, that some hooved animal had met a violent end here as it had come to drink. But zebra, kongoni and wildebeest are no mere mice in weight and size: no eagle owl could waft them away through the trees; no lion or leopard could drag them away to the shadows without leaving a broad trail. Here was a mystery, indeed, and Ratel did not care for the reek of the thing.

HE gnashed his teeth and grumbled to himself; and then, as if deciding that this was no place to meditate on mysteries, he took his flat body away from the spot, and struck a course away from the lake and proceeded across the veldt.

Again, he seemed to know just exactly where he was going and what business there would be to transact at the end of the trail; but he was still not in a hurry—for Ratel rarely hurried. He left hurrying to others, for he is one of the plodders of the veldt, keeping everlastingly at the thing before him until it is accomplished.

Once a veldt rat (who should have been in his runways near the lake) crossed directly before him—or rather, it intended crossing Ratel's trail—only to end its life with a startled squeak. A genet—which should have been spotted, but was black as the night instead—streaked like a bloodhound along the trail of that rat, and seeing the beast that had robbed him of his prey, hissed all the vile imprecations at Ratel that he could think of. But Ratel munched the warm body with leisure and paid not the slightest attention to this small beast with a catlike head and body like a mink. When he was finished, he moved truculently forward, and the genet erased himself from the scene like blown ashes.

Presently, though he had taken his good time about it, Ratel arrived at his destination—the *shamba* of a family of Uturos. Ah, the smells that assailed his nostrils here! There was, of course, the strong smell of man, but Ratel worried little about that, for some sixth sense told him that man was asleep. The smell that really interested him was the warm scent of domestic fowl.

But the Uturo is no laggard when it comes to building. His house is a long, low building, carefully constructed of poles and arranged to form one side of the compound. On the other three sides he erects a closely set fence made from a species of euphorbia tree. These sprout with branches, and leaves of sorts, in the manner of a willow post, and soon there is a growing fence around the compound.

Ratel went on a tour of inspection around the euphorbia fence, and found it tight as a drum—the Uturos had seen to that well, and the small, smooth poles, set closely together, gave him no purchase for his claws when he tried to climb. He was no amateur at climbing, either,—he would scale a tree like a black bear if there was honey to be found there,—but the Uturos had kept the fence nicely trimmed, so that the branches grew thick at the top only, and every attempt that Ratel made at climbing ended with a tumble of his fat body to the ground.

All of this time the scent of those roosting chickens was burning into his brain, and it was making him a bit more rattled than a ratel should become. Around and around he walked: a few places he tried digging under the fence, but the poles were set deep and had taken root, and though he has long, powerful digging claws,—all out of proportion to his size,—he was not disposed to spend a lot of time digging under tree-roots to get at those chickens.

Then he again walked methodically around the compound, sniffing hopefully here and there, until he came to the gate. This was made of the same smooth poles and was braced from the inside with heavier poles, but he sniffed around the bottom and found that the gate was

not embedded in the earth; and quicker than you can whistle to your dog, he set a regular volcanic eruption of earth flying and had a neat tunnel under the gate.

It took but a few moments to find where the fowl roosted, but the Uturos were fully aware that the night swarmed with creatures that enjoyed chicken for supper, and so had carefully built a coop for the small brown chickens which the natives of Africa keep for domestic fowl.

The coop was not nearly as strong as the fence, however, and so Ratel proceeded to tear at the branches of which it was composed, and soon, by dint of tooth and claw, he had an opening.

Here there was an interruption—and what a time for an interruption, just when he was about to drag a juicy hen from the coop! The dogs—of a mongrel variety, kept by the natives of this part of Africa—started a yelping uproar, and were soon out in the compound and all over Ratel.

Those dogs promptly wished they had not been quite so rash. They had caught something, to be sure, but from the way it acted, it might as lief have been the devil himself, and they would have given their flopping ears to be rid of it. Three to one it was at first, and then two to one; and it seemed the score would soon be one to nothing, for Ratel was proceeding to send the third one to its canine ancestors, when two grown boys—anxious to win their spurs as warriors—dashed out and joined the fight.

A spear was hurled in the light of a torch held aloft by one of them, it caught Ratel in the side, and scratched his loose skin. But here is a beast that can turn almost completely around in his own skin, and that loose, leathery hide saved him.

Then his ire was really aroused, and he closed with the Uturo boy who held the torch. Shrieking for help to his black gods, the Uturo dropped the torch and started for the house, with Ratel busily engaged in chewing the calf of his leg. Like a bulldog he hung on, and only let go when both black boys tried to get into the door at the same time and almost tore the frame-work down—scrapping Ratel off, to the serious damage of that black leg.

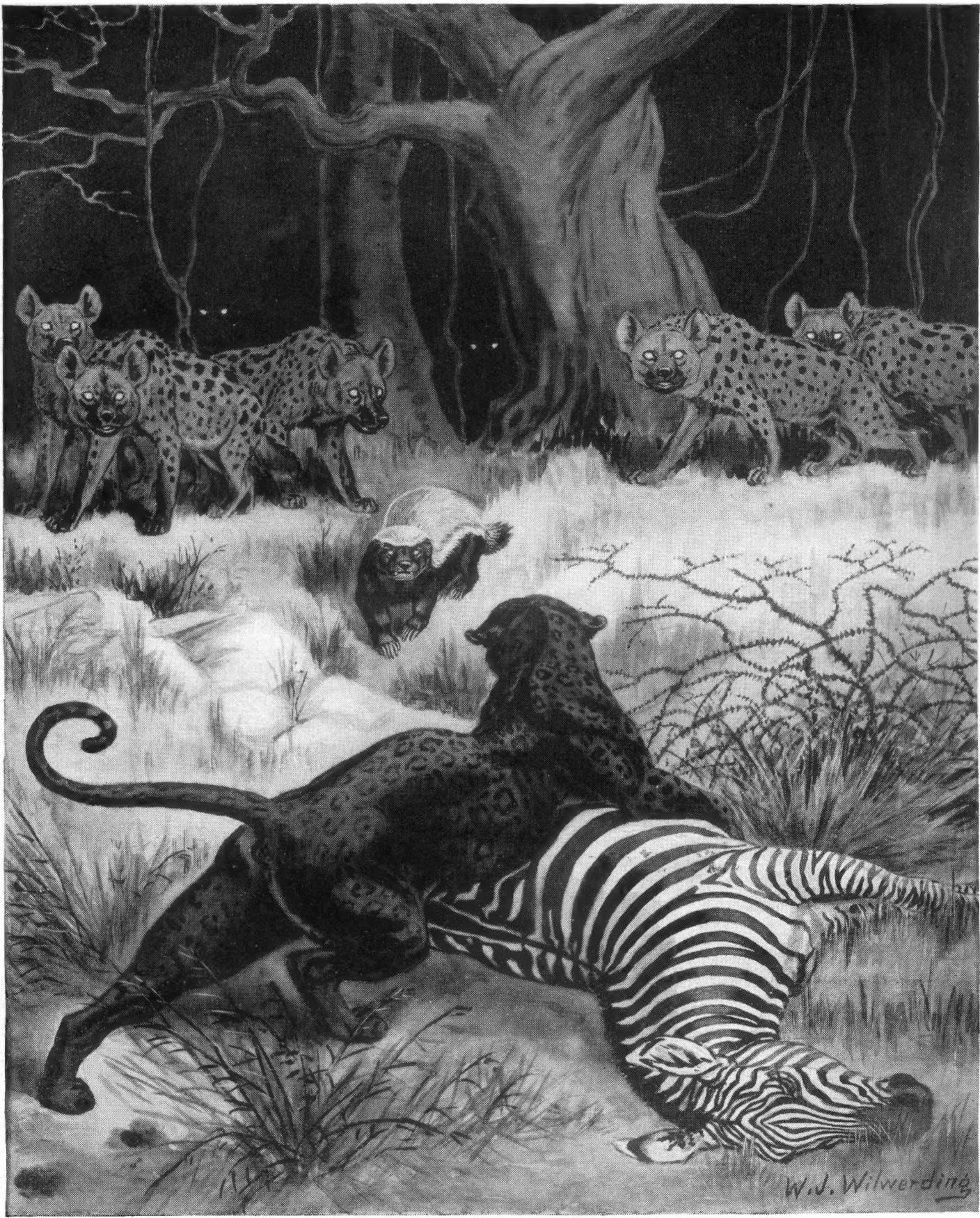
Then the honey-badger turned about and departed from there, for the house was in an uproar; the older men were preparing to join the fray, and Ratel had no desire to fight the whole Uturo tribe. He is quick to take the offensive when threatened, but content to mind his own affairs at other times.

His flat form was soon emerging from the tunnel under the gate, and in his grim jaws he carried a hen. He had gone in there on business, and after all the fighting and wounds he had received, he was not to be cheated out of his meal. He did not fight for pleasure, but to protect his rights and obtain the thing he went after; so he had helped himself to a hen on the way out.

A SHORT distance from the compound, he stopped and proceeded to devour his meal, and then, quite satisfied with the night's hunting, he started back toward his home burrow.

His way again took him along the lake shore and to the earlier scene of some foul deed. Here he stopped abruptly, for that which lay before him was even stranger than what he had come upon previously. Bits of striped skin lay here and there; here was a piece of crunched bone, and here again a bit of flesh, where before there had been nothing. A strange uneasiness assailed Ratel; what was this thing that made beasts vanish in the night, only to leave their remains on the same spot later?

A faint light appeared in the eastern sky, and it re-



W.J. Wilwerding

He crouched for a spring—and the thing that then took place made even the hyenas stop their cackling.

minded him that day would soon be at hand and that he should be in his burrow asleep when the sun scorched the earth. He took an extra sniff at the things that lay there and then ambled away toward his den. In the half-light he saw something move through the grove like a dark shadow, and stopped to test the air, but the wind was from him to whatever moved there, and having no interest in

pressing his investigation, he continued on the way to his burrow. . . .

Deep in his cool retreat, Ratel slept soundly through the day, and toward evening he awakened to hear the calling of a bird, that brought him instantly to the mouth of his burrow. Blinking at the light, his blunt, flat head quested this way and that. Then away he eagerly trundled.

Well he knew what that call meant, for it was the call of the honey-guide—the little somber-coated bird that had guided his clan to the honeycombs for untold generations. Usually the bird kept just ahead of him, urging him on; but this time it seemed that the bird was courting some one else's attention. Had some other honey-badger invaded his territory? Ratel must see about this at once!

Surely this was the case, for just ahead of him trundled another of his kind, following the bird's insistent calls, whistling and chuckling and singing a little song, as if this were a lark, and bird and beast were off on a picnic somewhere.

Ratel hastened his rolling gait and soon caught up to the intruder, and with bared fangs, he prepared to drive him away. But this business of eviction never took place, for he had no sooner prepared for combat than he sensed that a conflict would, indeed, be out of order.

FOR a long time Ratel had been without a mate, ever since that fateful night when he had accompanied her down to the lake shore to forage for what they might find in the acacia woods. Their hunting had taken them on separate trails, and missing her after a time, Ratel had wandered over to join her; but following her trail under the trees, he had come upon a strange spoor and then his mate's trail came abruptly to an end. Back and forth he had quested anxiously, but always the trail ended in nothing. And the morning had found him wending homeward alone, knowing full well that he would never see his mate again. Trails that end suddenly in the wild mean but one thing—the end of things for the trail-maker.

Now Ratel saw that a female of his species had again come into his life, and he was well content to follow in her wake, instead of driving her off. But apparently, she was not nearly as pleased about his following her, and at appropriate intervals, she stopped her chuckling and whistling and turned to hiss and make short charges at him. Each time he gave ground patiently, and just as patiently followed in her trail.

Soon the excited honey-bird perched in a tree: an old gnarled mimosa, all honeycombed by burrowing insects. Here the female ratel climbed the tree, hooking her strong claws into the rough bark, and was soon tearing away the punk-like shell to get at the honey which, as the swarm of bees indicated, was stored in the hollow. Little did she care for the angry, buzzing bees. These marshaled their forces and tried to drive her out, and she was soon covered with them, but her coarse hair and leathery skin were proof against their poisoned darts, and she soon had her muzzle besmeared with the golden treasure they had so patiently hoarded.

Ratel stopped at the foot of the tree and made no attempt to ascend. No doubt he felt that she was very selfish about this thing, but he contented himself with the stray bits of comb that she scraped from the bees' nest with her long claws.

Soon she had scattered the rotten wood and scraped the honeycomb out with a scoop of her claws. Ratel was at it the instant it scattered on the ground. But something, that might have been a tornado, came scrambling down the tree and was at him in an instant. Had it been a male of his species, he would have turned and given fang for fang, but instead he backed away, more wounded in feelings than in body, and left her to the banquet.

While the honey-bird helped itself to the scattered grubs,—which was part of the bargain in this strange partnership of bird and beast,—Ratel lunched sparingly on what scattered pieces of comb he could find.

The female had apparently traveled far and was, in consequence, very hungry, for the ground was clean when

she proceeded on her way. Also she seemed to be in a better mood, and when night found this pair, they were walking along peaceably side by side, hunting for locusts, mice, birds' nests or whatever the veldt put in their way.

Then—whether it was because Ratel was hungry, or whether he just wanted to show off a bit to his new-found mate, I cannot say—he led the way to the Uturos' *shamba*.

Once there, he spent no time in investigating the fence, for animals learn much more quickly than man with his conceited mind will give them credit, but proceeded at once to the gate—expecting no doubt to find the tunnel he had made the night before.

But the natives had closed his first excavation and had driven stakes into the ground under the gate, so that things were a bit disconcerting. Yet it takes more than stakes to baffle one of the champion diggers of the veldt, and with the help of the female, a good imitation of a miniature steam shovel was presented. A new tunnel was soon made; then they shook the dirt from their sides and ambled toward the coop where the fowls were kept.

The female had gone in first, and Ratel was following, when she suddenly backed up so quickly that she rammed against Ratel's nose and brought him to a stop all a-bristle.

A rank odor was in their nostrils, and then they perceived that a dog—the one that had escaped Ratel's fangs the previous night—was dead upon the ground, and a black, sinister shape stood over it. Some one else had arrived there before them, and with angry, throaty growls was disputing the right of way.

I have said that Ratel was no coward; yet at the same time he was not altogether foolhardy, and the thing that crouched before them in the shadows was more than his match—yea, more than a match for both of them.

But the battle was not to be of their choice: with a fiendish snarl, the thing lurched forward, like an arrow speeding from a bowstring, and in another second the compound rang with the conflict. Hiss, snarl, growl, flying fur—claws that slashed and tore—fang closing on fang! Then the female honey-badger was on her back with tender underside exposed, teeth working desperately in the neck of the black demon, long foreclaws ripping into its velvet skin. But the four feet of the fearful creature were all working at once; claws like knives had soon torn her body to ribbons.

ALL this time Ratel was very busy on his own account; running in and worrying the huge beast, tearing long gashes in its flanks, ripping pieces of flesh from its tough-muscled body. And now, the beast, having finished with his mate, turned to Ratel—who whirled quickly about and fastened his teeth in the black demon's hindquarters. Then the air was thick with hiss and snarl and ghastly language, as the dark beast turned round and round in futile fury, swinging Ratel about like a flail. But ever his teeth held fast.

This takes time to tell, but it all really happened in just a few seconds; and with all that din going on, it wasn't long before the Uturos were out in force, carrying flaming torches, clubs and spears.

One look was enough to tell them the nature of the thing that confronted them, and they turned to retreat; but no man on earth could ever be as quick as that black demon of hate that had invaded their compound. In a flash he had torn the arm of one, lacerated the face of another and had borne still another to earth. But now spears were brought into play, and war-clubs and burning firewood filled the air. Under the pressure of that attack the black demon gave ground, and snatching up the limp form of the dog, leaped over the compound fence and was a part of the black night.

RATEL had hung on like a furred fury until the Uturos had taken a hand with spear and fire; and then, releasing his hold and leaving the battle to them, he trotted over to where his mate lay on the trampled ground. One sniff was enough to tell him that he would wait for her in vain; and turning about, he left by the very tunnel he had entered.

Very sore he was of body; but his thoughts were not on his own wounds. He had lost his second mate to this black terror of the night, and resentment burned in his brain with a sullen fury. . . .

A little fox crossed his trail, intent on some hunting of his own; and in a split second Ratel had bereft it of its life; nor did he stop to taste the meat, but went on as if wandering in a nightmare.

Crossing a sandy stretch, he heard a low hiss and saw a viper raise its ugly head to strike. A moment later it writhed its last in his crunching teeth. Here Ratel stopped to feast upon the reptile's meat, and deciding that he had been into enough excitement for one ratel on one night, he waddled to his den to lick his wounds, and to rest.

The barking of zebras going to water awakened him early the next evening, and having already forgotten a mate that he had no sooner acquired than lost, he followed in the wake of the zebras toward the lake. Down there one usually found good hunting; for in the acacia groves there were many birds and rodents. One could climb a tree and raid a bird's nest at times, or catch rodents as they ran along their grassy trails. Also there was the most excellent chance of catching some reptile bent on a similar hunt; for Ratel was adept at getting around the fanged defense of the most deadly of these snakes. His coarse hair and loose leathery skin, which covered a layer of fat, was an effective armor that was hard to pierce; and when meat came by the yard, the hunt was well worth while.

But he had just started to enter the acacia woods when he was forced to leave the trail hurriedly or be trampled under foot. He took refuge under some thorn bushes to evade the stampede of zebras that stormed pell-mell from the woods. After them came a herd of impalla, jumping high over grass and bushes in long, graceful leaps; and a lone Grant's gazelle buck, with horns that seemed much too long for his size, brought up the rear.

The drumming of their hoofs became fainter and fainter and blended into the night before Ratel, testing the air curiously, proceeded about his affairs again. Then the wind wafted a scent to him, and he knew it for the smell of the same creature that had engaged him in battle and had robbed him of his mate the night before.

Perhaps he felt that he was again about to be attacked; probably he was urged on by a burning vengeance—we cannot say, for who knows why wild creatures do these things?—but at any rate he advanced steadily in the direction of that formidable scent.

AND there, on the lake shore, he found the forbidding beast, a huge male leopard Nature had played a prank upon and had given a black skin instead of the spotted orange-tan of most of his clan. It was busily engaged in trying to drag the remains of a zebra up a tree, but it was having a hard time of it, for this was a much heavier zebra than the young colt it had killed several nights before and had later feasted on, high up among the branches. Hyenas hung in the offing and laughed with ghastly humor—hoping, no doubt, that he would not be able to drag this one up a tree, as was his custom, to cheat them of what remained.

And when Ratel walked upon the scene, the laughter increased, until they discerned the nature of this beast

that approached, and then the laughter stopped while the rowdy crew made room for him to pass. Well they knew the mettle of this little beast, and none of that cowardly crowd dared dispute his right of way.

And then the black beast saw him too, and all the fury of which his being was composed seemed to surge up like a volcano. Here was the little creature that had disturbed his last night's hunting; here was one that had dared to tear furrows in the velvet black of his skin. He crouched for the spring, and—the thing that then took place made even the hyenas stop their fiendish cackling.

One of the limbs of the trees above the black leopard seemed to become alive. A rounded branch disengaged itself and swung slowly downward. Like a pendulum it poised above the leopard for a moment. Some sixth sense seemed to warn the huge cat; perhaps it was the sudden silence of the hyenas, or was it that his acute powers of hearing had told him of this other presence? At any rate, with every muscle tensed for the spring, he checked himself for a moment to look nervously about.

THAT ill-timed hesitation sealed his fate, for the next moment his lithe form was enfolded in the coils of a huge python. Then Ratel and the hyenas were forced to make room, while the big cat fought desperately for life with tearing teeth and raking claws.

Back and forth across the glade the battle raged. Twice the python lost his tail-hold on a tree, and then, rolling over and over, cat and reptile thrashed about until the huge snake again obtained a leverage on tree or bush.

Ever the python wound his coils tighter and more tight, with the black leopard fighting for advantage, tooth and claw, with gasping breath—ripping long furrows in scaly coils, sinking fangs into constricting muscles that were slowly crushing the furious life out of his black body.

But the python had the advantage in the battle, and with a quick twist tightened another coil about him, imprisoning those flailing forepaws. Then the great reptile's head flashed forward with wide-opened jaws and fastened on the leopard's muzzle. But it so happened that the leopard's mouth was open at the time, and the python's lower jaw was in the huge cat's mouth. With a last desperate bite, the leopard closed his jaws; but his evil days had run their course, and the fire that had burned so fiercely within him went out forever.

Still in death his fierce spirit seemed to linger, for he held the python's jaw clamped viselike in his own.

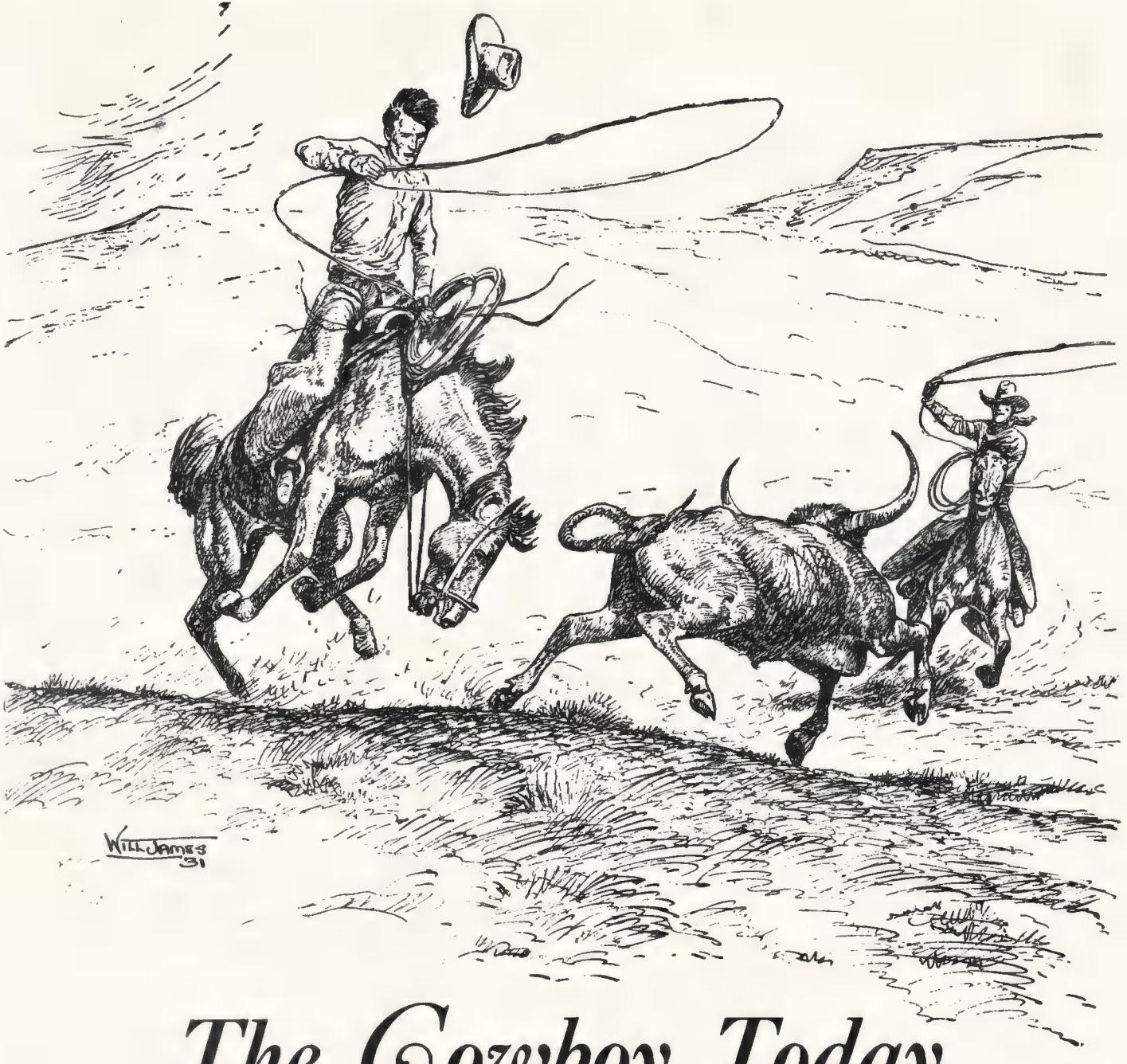
Then Ratel ran in, swiftly and alone,—for hyenas are too cowardly to attack a thing that might fight back,—and in a twinkling his teeth were at work. With one raking slash, he almost severed head from neck of that scaled monster. Then he moved quickly to one side, while the huge coils unfolded from the leopard and thrashed bush and grass and leaves to flinders in a last agony.

Feebler and still more feeble the scaly length convulsed and twisted, and then with a quiver, lay quiet beside the zebra's and leopard's outstretched forms.

"Woo-ow-o-o-o-o!" a hyena broke the stillness, as if to shout: "The feast is spread!" Yet none dared approach till Ratel had his fill.

Bristling and cocky, Ratel kept the whole hyena clan at a distance until he was well-nigh gorged with meat. Then he wandered homeward with a very self-satisfied air. The night was still young, but he had fed longer and more fully than for many, many weeks; and he waddled along with a decided roll.

A pair of black-backed jackals passed him on the run, answering the hyenas' call to meat. And when the jackals and hyenas had finished, the black terror of the water-hole was a part of the past.



The Cowboy Today

"Bronc's and Ropes," Mr. James calls this, the first of a notable series he is drawing and describing for us.

By WILL JAMES

WITH many outfits I worked for we often had to rope off of bronc's. A bronc' is an unbroken range horse, as wild as any wild horse, and as tough, but bigger. A rope is what you catch other animals with. Them animals wear brands on their hides, and the only way to get that brand on 'em is by roping 'em and stretching 'em out. A rope can be a mighty dangerous thing even on a gentle horse, whether you know how to handle it or not. But on a bronc, or on a spoilt horse such as I've pictured, the rope is a heap more dangerous.

In the picture above, there's a cowboy riding a spoilt horse, one of the kind that watches for a chance to get his rider down. The rider was just about to rope a steer, maybe for no reason excepting to unlimber his rope-arm a bit, when the horse made him change his notion by bogging his

head and going to bucking. The rider knows better than to let his loop settle down on anything right then, and just so he won't get himself and the horse tangled up in it together, he'll try and keep it in the air and keep himself in the saddle.

Another rider comes along and is going to make a pass at the steer. Maybe he's riding a spoilt horse too, and maybe he won't want that steer after he catches him. A wild heavy steer on one end of a rope and an ornery horse at the other end, with a cowboy being cut in two by the twist of that same rope, sure aint nothing to grin at.

I've seen mahy things happen that way, and a few of them things happened to me. But it's hard to kill a cowboy—and these two will be riding to camp tonight and telling one another how that steer sure has been "busted."

An old sea-dog learns New Tricks

In this memorable drama of hardship and hazard by the gifted author of "Sea Wolves" and "Shanghai Bill."

By CAPTAIN DINGLE

Illustrated by Richard H. Rodgers

SOMEWHERE beyond the driving snow lay Boston port. Between the port and the schooner lay a snarling coast and a sea renowned for its cruelty. Skipper Kane gripped his wheel and glared at the blinding snow with stung, savage eyes. It was a small schooner, a hundred tons; the years had dealt with it tolerantly, but had dealt with it nevertheless. Skipper Kane had grown up with the *Harrier*, and he was nearing sixty. Kane's father had grown up with the *Harrier* too. The bleak decks, the checked, warped masts, and the scarred bulwarks shouted above the screaming wind that years must leave their telltale marks.

"Boy!" bellowed Kane at length. No answer. "Boy!" Still no response, and now he shouted:

"Peter!"

The little galley door opened a crack, and a young fellow dodged out gingerly. He shivered, ducked his head to the gale, and ran nervously aft. He looked as bleak as the snowdrifted decks.

"Why 'n't you come when I called ye first? Hey?" the Skipper snarled angrily. Peter answered without looking up:

"I did come soon as I heard my name. I'm no boy!"

Kane raised his mighty fist, his icy beard bristling. The blow was not struck. Somehow he could not beat down the crouching son who was his woeful trial.

"You stay on deck, where I can see ye!" he ordered. "On watch, aint ye? And a fine, upstandin' watchmate ye be! Scared o' the cold, and scared o' the sea, and scared o' aught that makes men! Been huggin' the fire, aint ye?"

"I've been trying the radio," Peter muttered. He heard the grunt of disgust that burst from his parent's deep chest, and it aroused something in him which his father stubbornly refused to believe existed. "Can I help it if I can't stand cold and hate wet? You old shellbacks are so used to discomfort you think it's necessary. It's all wrong. You send a boy to school, and expect him to come out with the same moldy ideas you taught him before he went in. Nobody but an old whale would go on enduring a life like this. Wise men take to power. They make money too, where you just keep out of the poorhouse. This old windjammer's as out of date as—as—"

"Well?" growled the Skipper ominously. Peter glanced up, and most of his fire died. He ended lamely: "As a horse and buggy!"

"Never mind no horse and buggy!" snapped the Skipper. "You go and git the lead-line and take a soundin'. And mind you don't git wet, poor little felly! Hold on tight to something solid. 'Twould be a shame to lose you!"

Peter made his painful way to the main rigging and unhitched the lead-line. The seas that drenched him made him tremble through sheer stark chill. His fingers were blue, and the line was stiff with ice. The lead itself was like a heavy icicle possessed of a devil of gravity. He had never believed it weighed no more than fourteen pounds. The tallow he squeezed into the arming cavity was unpleasant to his touch. He gathered the line in a clumsy coil, swung the lead without art and let it go instinctively when a growling sea leaped up in his face and submerged him. The line slipped through his hands. The end flipped into the sea. Angrily he went stumbling aft.

"What ye get?" rapped Kane, anxious for his position.

"Lost the lead," returned Peter suddenly. And before the old man could gather breath to overwhelm him he uttered at speed: "If you didn't worship the moldy idea that old dogs can't learn new tricks, you'd have sold this ruin long ago and bought a comfortable little steamer. Then you would never have to depend on a silly lead-line. You'd find out where you were by radio bearings. None of this muck and slop is necessary. Might as well live in a piggery!"

"You go and bring me a mug o' coffee!" gasped Kane, and gripped the wheel fiercely until his boy was beyond his reach. Only by that errand could Peter escape the wrath that he had aroused. . . .

The mate came up to take over. Besides Kane and his son, the *Harrier* boasted but two hands, the mate and the cook. Few enough, for winter voyaging; but still enough, and more than the trade was well able to stand lately.

"I'll stay along with you, George. That sissy boy o' mine's gone and lost the lead-line overboard. Just hold her as she goes, while I run down to peep at the chart."

Peter slipped into his blankets fully clothed. It was the only way he could get warm. Down in the cabin it was dark and dreary, for the bilge was churning, and the deck leaked. Old Job Kane would allow his son no luxuries; the lad was forbidden to read in his sleepless dark hours. Only one lamp was permitted, and that swung, turned low, in the corner where the chart lay tacked to a board. Job stumbled below, and turned up the kerosene lamp. He glanced across at the other bunk where Peter lay, and grunted again. Peter had rigged up a canvas deflector which carried the drip from overhead clear of his bunk. Confound the boy, Job thought. Why couldn't he have turned out like his brothers? They were all lusty men, every one had done his bit aboard the old *Harrier* until able to launch out and get a vessel of his own. Every one had a schooner too. No fuss or frills about them. But here was Peter, the youngest,—the smartest, everybody told him,—shivering at a drop of water, wasting his



time when he should be sleeping in contriving gadgets to keep him dry!

Job Kane swore, and swung around with a passionate gesture to the chart. His shoulder struck the lamp and knocked it from its nail. In an instant it exploded. Fire ran over the cabin floor, and licked at Job's beard as he stooped to smother it. Cheap oil, with a low flash-point; cotton blankets, and an oilcloth table-cover—swift conflagration.

"George!" roared the Skipper, and even then would not call for Peter. There was a fire-extinguisher hanging on the bulkhead. It had hung there for a year. It was another modern gadget which Job Kane had only contempt for. He stumbled about, dragging out the cotton blanket which already fed the flames, vaguely hoping to smother them with it. He was fiercely knocked aside, and his eyes, throat, and lungs were assaulted by a terrific chemical reek. He reeled out before the fumes. Peter pumped away with his extinguisher, and thoroughly put out the fire.

"Why, Peter—" Job began. Peter found flour in the stores locker, dusted a handful over a bad burn on his cheek, and hurried into his bunk again, feeling sick.

"Another of your old tricks!" he whimpered. "Oil lamps! If you wasn't a mossy old has-been, you'd be enjoying electric light. Perhaps you'll believe enough in fire-extinguishers next time to use one, too."

Peter spoke fiercely. He hated himself because pain was making him want to weep. He spoke fiercely in order to frighten the tears back. And when his father had gone on deck again, Peter turned on his tiny reading-bulb, secretly run on dry batteries. He resumed his reading. He never heard any of the sounds of the outside evil weather.

Skipper Kane worried his ancient vessel through a cruel

The schooner staggered in the surf; seas burst about her.
At long-drawn last the sail was filled again.

night. He was man enough to fight the gale, blizzard to boot, and ask favors of none; but this voyage his heart was not in his work. Peter had been sent to school. That was the trouble. Old Job, and his other sons, had made good without book-learning. Look at them. Job Kane and his *Harrier* were known from end to end of the coast. His sons and their schooners were owing nobody. They were not making fortunes, perhaps, nobody was making a fortune in sailing vessels. But they were carrying on, when others fell for steam or power, and everybody admitted there were no better sailors than the Kanes. Upright, self-reliant, old-fashioned men they were. And here was Peter, had to be dragged to sea out of a garage—a blessed hospital for horseless carriages! A favor, Peter said he was doing the old man, consenting to try the schooner for a voyage. How else did he expect to learn to sail the *Harrier*? He'd be glad of that knowledge when the old man went. There would be nothing else for the lad except the vessel. How could he make a living, as his brothers made theirs, unless he learned the business as they had learned it?

Peter had told him the business was played out. Told him to get into steam and make real money. The boy had told him that while yet at school. Perhaps if Job had been younger, he might have listened. But one of his favorite maxims was that you can't teach an old dog new tricks. He uttered it so often that he believed it. It made him furious to hear Peter ridicule the silly old saying, claiming that even an old dog can be coaxed to leave a gnawed-out bone by offering a juicy new one.

In a screaming squall and a blinding drive of snow and sleet, the *Harrier* rushed headlong in toward a sudden up-

lift of iron coast. Job Kane rolled his wheel, bellowing for all hands. Slushy and George burst forth from their corners, clawing for the headsheets. Peter crawled along the slippery decks, trembling with agonizing chill.

"Hold that stays'l till she fills! Don't let it fly! Oh, wooden men!" roared Job. The schooner staggered in the surf. Green seas burst about her. The rocks grinned. George got in the way of a block, and was knocked headlong. Somebody in the forward hurly-burly was clinging to the flying sheet. Slushy fumbled on his knees. At long-drawn last the sail was filled again. The schooner's head swung seaward, to temporary safety. Three shaky figures made their way aft, George bleeding badly from a cracked cheek.

"What was it?" snapped Job. "Could ye make it out?"

"How could a felly make anything out in this muck?" muttered George. "Don't ye know where ye are?"

Job bit back the retort that arose. He did not know where he was, that was a fact; but it was not for him to admit it to underlings. He flogged the vessel to seaward; then, at what should be a safe distance, hove her to.

Three men and a lad huddled in the galley, snatching food. George, with his head wrapped up, swore frankly and freely. Peter sat in a corner, trying to hide his little portable radio set which was so much like a red rag to his father. Old Job noisily drank scalding coffee, and said bitter things.

"I never sailed with such a lot o' tailors! Aint one o' ye worth bilge. Two o' ye useless and one o' ye, my own son, a coward! *Arrgh!*"

"Get yer own fambly to sail with ye next trip!" growled George.

"My own fambly!" laughed Job bitterly.

"You be crazy, Job, if you says your boy's a coward," shouted Slushy. "Did he git that burned face bein' a coward? Was it a coward hung on to that there sheet when George got knocked galley-west? You got no call to spout, you as don't know where the schooner's got to!"

Job dashed down his mug and stumbled out into the storm. When he was gone, Peter switched on his radio, and began turning the loop aerial. The instrument cackled; then a distant and laughing voice issued from the speaker:

"You have been listening for the last half-hour to the Sunny South Dance Orchestra, through the courtesy of the Jollity Candy Kitchens. Station Y.O.Y., signing off until eight-thirty. Goood-bye-ee!"

Through the night the *Harrier* labored in the seas. Job Kane kept the deck, his eyes burning with salt and ice. He kept the foghorn going; and at far too frequent intervals the roar or the groan of other vessels answered. Some came much too near. Once he heard the thundering progress of a great steamer so close that he shouted at it in frenzy. Some were fishing craft, making for port on sure courses. They had power; most of them had radio which gave them a true direction. The *Harrier* lay at the mercy of all, only her luck keeping her from disaster. Job Kane only knew that he was crippled by a useless crew. Bitterly he thought that, of the sons he had reared, he must now be cursed by the one he could not depend on.

Peter remained in the warm galley between his spells at the foghorn. He was content. He could turn on his radio set and with the doors shut his father could not hear. There were a thousand voices on the air. Voices from warm, pleasant places; happy voices, singing, talking, giving news of the day, and prospects for crops. Peter could lose himself in those voices. When they ceased, he could find satisfying food for his hungry soul in the pages of his radio magazine which told of wonders he always hoped to seek and achieve. . . .

The blizzard increased. Job stumbled below to close his aching eyes for an hour, leaving the mate in charge. He could close his eyes; but sleep evaded him. Peter persisted in occupying his thoughts. His anger at Peter was the greater because, for all his harshness, he passionately loved the boy. Of all his sons, Peter had been the brightest. Until he went to school he promised to grow into a real man; he lacked his brothers' bulk, but he had a smartness which they could never equal. He stopped far short of their virile growth; but the real grievance to Job was that Peter showed no indication of falling in love with the old schooner. Love for the sea, yes, Peter had that, it was born in him. Blood will tell in some ways. But Peter's idea of the sea was that it was made for men to master by brains since it could never be conquered by muscle. To Job that was only another sign of cowardice. Men of the real old breed fought the sea with their hands, and bodies, with canvas and hemp, with bowels. A man could always distinguish seamen from steamer fellows. Pretty uniforms, and pale faces; eyes that had never peered into the gale except through glass windows kept clean by revolving gadgets; hands all white and soft, like a woman's. Steamers might run on tracks for all the hardship they knew. The *Harrier* rolled and lurched amidst a snarling chaos of waters. That was where a man showed his stuff. But Peter. . . . Job Kane dozed uneasily.

Ice loaded the schooner down. She buried her bows in the combing seas. Her reefed foresail, swollen and black with wet, filled and shook, and filled again as she swooped up and off. Her helm was lashed. Through his troubled semi-consciousness Job heard the grunt of the foghorn at intervals. Now and again he heard the sound of other horns and sirens. Vaguely he was aware of a longer interval. A hoarse blare sounded close. There were other, less familiar sounds. Then Peter was shaking him, fiercely.

"Dad! They're taking the boat!"

Against the white and black of snow and sea the schooner wallowed, forlorn. Job Kane's fierce eyes tried to see beyond the driving blindness. The dory was gone. Of her going remained only the telltale sign of shattered ice at the rail and the churned snow where booted feet had scuffed in lifting a weight from the

deck. From a distance came the receding bleat of a trawler's siren.

"They heard it coming, and George got scared," Peter gasped. "Another steamer almost ran us down just before."

Job shook his fist and swore. Then he swung around and uttered an unpleasant laugh.

"I suppose you couldn't get out o' the galley quick enough!"

"I wouldn't dare go out there in a boat!" stammered Peter, staring at the leaping sea.



"Wouldn't dare! If you wasn't such a sissy you'd likely be safe aboard one o' them comfortable steamers by now!" said Job. "Get back into the galley, and see if you can keep the fire goin'. We'll have to eat, and that's about your worth."

That winter gale is in the records. Many a stout ship found land where she didn't want it. It was a bad time for fully manned and well equipped vessels; a grievous time for all others. The *Harrier* was low in the water by sheer weight of ice. At the end of twenty-four hours the gale was as blinding as ever. Job Kane had but the foggiest notion of his position. He tied a pig of iron to some spare line, trying for a sounding. The schooner could spare none of her gear; she had no store line; the pig of iron went to the bottom, but there was no line left when it found mud. Job stamped the deck to relieve his feelings and warm his feet, then entered the galley for a mug-up. The stove was cold. At first he saw nothing; then he encountered Peter's legs.

Peter stood on the coal locker, his head and shoulders out through the skylight. Job shook a leg. Peter did not respond. Then Job clambered on top of the galley house to see, fearful in his heart that mishap had come to Peter. Peter's head and shoulders were white with snow. He bent over his radio set, rapt in something far beyond the ken of Job Kane. This way and that the lad turned his loop. But Job thought of that cold stove. He saw red. Mouthing incoherently, he plunged upon Peter, swinging a savage kick at the radio set.

Peter sensed rather than saw him. Instinctively the lad shielded his precious instrument, and Job's kick thudded heavily upon his son's shoulder. In the belated effort to deflect the kick, Job slipped on the icy roof, and fell. He rolled off onto the deck, and lay there groaning. Peter left his radio set and was beside Job quickly.

"Gosh, Dad, you shouldn't—" began Peter.

"Get back to yer music-box, you useless lump!" groaned Job. He tried to rise, and pitched forward, his grim face twisted with pain.

"Leg's broke," he muttered. Peter tried to help, but the old man pushed him away. He dragged himself aft, and wedged himself against the wheel gear-casing. He sat there in silence, fiercely resenting his luck. Even when a wreath of smoke swirled from the galley funnel he refused to see good in it. Presently Peter appeared, bearing a mug of coffee. That was about all he could think of, to comfort the crippled old man.

"You did it yourself, Dad," he stated. "Might as well kick straight out at me as try to kick my radio. You drink up that coffee, then tell me what to do about the vessel. Have to do something, or you'll lose that leg."

Job made a sound. It was supposed to be a laugh.

"Do something! Aye, if there was a man aboard something might be done, likely. Stay in the galley, my son, and play radio. That's all you can do. I can look after the schooner, half-man as I be."

Peter sat in the galley and pondered. He could think better in the warmth. Outside it was freezing cold. He shuddered, even by the stove, thinking of that broken leg lying in the icy slush. The schooner swooped and plunged, lost in the wild maze of the sea. Peter turned paler still



Skipper Kane worried his vessel through a cruel night—but his heart was not in his work.

at the thought of trying to sail her into port. If the full crew had so near wrecked her on that forbidding coast, how could he dare to hope? He stood on the coal locker again, pushing the radio through the skylight.

He had been reading about bearing-finding by radio. He knew that his loop more or less indicated the direction of the station sending. How that was to solve the problem was not clear, and the old man would never descend to give an opinion. There was an article in his magazine about a new invention being tried out by a few lighthouses, which actually sent out a call giving the name of the light. It did more, much more; but in order to make full use of the thing a different set than his was needed. It was all so hopeless; yet the old man's leg was surely in jeopardy, and at his age a frostbitten broken leg might easily mean death. Peter caught a signal. He listened intently, carefully adjusting his loop. Then he covered his set, and made his way to the wheel.

"Dad, something's got to be done about you. Let's steer in toward there," he indicated a direction, "and try to make port. I'm sure it's there."

"Sure, eh?" rasped Job. "Yer radio told ye, eh?"

"It did! Don't laugh, Dad. You're in no position to laugh. I am sure."

"If I ever get a square kick at that—" Job stopped, and groaned. "One thing is sure," he panted, "and that's there aint no port nowheres nigh where you p'inted. I aint right sure o' where we are, but I know durned well where we aint! Keep yer fire goin'."

Peter knelt and felt the broken leg, digging under the thick clothing, cutting away what could not be removed, and Job raved in vain.

"Well, whether you'll let me try or not, I won't let you stay out here," Peter suddenly stated, and Job's eyes glit-

tered resentfully at the new note. He protested, tried to beat off Peter's hands; but Peter got behind him, seized his wrists with nervous strength, and began to drag him.

The frozen snow made sliding easy. Job was heavy, but Peter was desperate. If all were known, Peter was frightened by the situation. He hauled and heaved, and ignored his father's bitter opposition until he got him to the galley door. Then it was harder. Old Job groaned and cursed as he was cruelly bundled over the storm sill; he was speechless when Peter hoisted and boosted him on to the long bench before the stove. Then Peter left him, and shut the door on him.

Job lay in the darkness, his brooding eyes on the red spot under the stove door. He heard Peter overhead. Then the skylight was shut. Peter climbed down to the deck. Job heard nothing for awhile; then there was the flap of canvas, and the schooner began to go forward.

"Peter! Don't you dare do nawthin'! Peter! Holy Sailor, the lad's goin' to drown us both!" Job shouted in anguish, then swooned.

Peter had slacked the fore-sheet and released the helm. His radio stood by the wheel, and clumsily he contrived to handle the wheel and adjust his loop. His eyes blazed with desperate hope. The longer he kept his eyes off those terrible seas the safer he felt; yet he gave attention to his steering, and his breath began to quicken. The signal he was getting now came from straight ahead, and that was where he must go. Job said that way lay destruction; it seemed so, and yet Peter believed in the gadget he knew rather than the ancient lore of his father already proven faulty. He watched the compass point when the radio signal came clear. He listened to it intently; and his pale face flushed.

"This is Boston Light calling! This is Boston Light calling!" it came. And between calls there came the established fog signal of the light, transmitted by radio. Peter slipped a becket over the wheel and rushed to the galley.

"Dad! It's the new gadget I've got! Boston Light, and we're steering straight for it!"

Job made no response. He was unconscious. Peter hurriedly looked at the fire, replenished it, and ran back to his wheel. He was warm with enthusiasm now.

The seas swept the ice-fettered schooner. Freezing sprays flayed his face and hands. But Peter's eyes stared into the storm; his face was red. The signals were fainter. That worried and puzzled him. If he were steering toward the sending-point they should get louder. Then they ceased altogether; and he knew that portable radio sets are not made to stand salt water very long. He ran to the galley again. Job opened despairing eyes.

"Dad," cried Peter excitedly, "which side of the light shall I go?"

"What light?" Job gasped. "D'ye see any light?"

"I got it on the radio! Which side? Quick! I must get back to the wheel."

"It don't matter which side. You'll wreck us anyhow."

The old man was bitter; but Peter had not waited to hear. He must watch the yawning, laboring schooner. He'd ask again presently. Now he must put all his strength and courage into holding the vessel up to her work; and the sweeping seas could make him shiver even while he glowed. If it was not so deathly cold! And there was something clutching at the schooner's keel. She steered madly. The seas were alive, dragging at the *Harrier* to destroy her. Peter gripped the wheel. He dared not leave it now.

JOBI moved along the bench. Every inch was agonizing. But he must look out. That boy was bound to drown both of them. Job got to the door, and managed to open it. Almost at the cost of consciousness again he dragged his

body along so that he might put out his head. Daylight had come. And what daylight! The *Harrier* was armored in ice. Job recognized in the quality of the seas the proximity of land. And he peered aft. There stood Peter, iced like the vessel, crouched, fighting with the kicking wheel with teeth clenched and eyes set fiercely ahead. Job rubbed his own eyes, and stared again. That couldn't be Peter. Peter never stood four-square to the gale like that. Yet it was Peter too; for a stinging spray flew aboard, slashed Peter's face and he ducked from it, uttering a smothered cry. But when he raised his head again there was courage there—the courage that faces what it is afraid of. There was complete confidence too.

Job's deep chest swelled, and he breathed heavily. The boy was almost a man! If only he had shown a little of this before. But he was surely going to drown them now. Job must get out there and take that wheel.

Job put his good foot on the brick floor. He sat up with a start, listening. There was a well-known sound. How often had he heard that sound? It was ahead, not far off. It was the siren fog signal of Boston Light!

"Peter! Oh, Pete! You can pass either side of it, lad! Then steer west six mile and pass south o' the light-house into the harbor!" Job sank back breathless. Peter waved a hand carelessly, and avoided the lightship that suddenly loomed out of the driving murk.

THE *Harrier*'s anchor was down. She lay in shelter among many vessels, and the air was clearing. Peter flew a flag, and hoped a doctor would come soon. There was no boat to take his father ashore, and that leg was very bad. Idly Peter wondered that there were no sailing craft near. He expected to find the harbor crowded with the helpless windjammers. He told Job about it, when he went to look in on him.

"Huh! Maybe the other schooners aint equipped with radio," grunted Job. He was ungracious enough about radio, but inwardly he was warm because Peter had shown a bit of the Kane stuff. Peter looked inside his radio, drying above the stove. It would be all right when dry.

When the doctor arrived at last, Job's two big elder sons came with him. The doctor looked at the leg, and made a grimace. He went about setting it, and called over to his boat for a stretcher.

"Lucky if you don't lose it," he said. "A little bit longer and you certainly would have lost it. Hold his hands, you fellows."

They talked to Job, to take his mind off his pain.

"The *Harrier*'s about the only sailin' craft to make harbor," they said. "We both got wrecked tryin' to make it. Good job we was insured, Dad. We're goin' to look fer a smart motor vessel between us. Them's the only vessels that come safe through. Got them radio things, they have. That's one above the stove, aint it, Peter? You better ship along o' us, Pete. You can work the dinkus."

"When you're about again, Dad, better join with us. One good motor vessel'll beat twenty old windjammers without power," his eldest son said when the doctor was winding the long bandage about the splint.

Into Job Kane's keen eyes came a light which defeated his pain. He looked toward Peter, busy fiddling with his drying radio. Here were the very sons he had always flaunted in Peter's face for their stalwart qualities, coming right back to what Peter had all the time advocated. He had seen Peter too, the real man in Peter. It was a twinkle that lighted his eyes now. He even laughed.

"We'll see. Time enough," he answered his sons. "Seems to me for windjammers you're in a hurry. Peter, my son, before they hikes me ashore, jest see what's on the radio, will ye?"

Illustrated by
Allen Moir Dean



Evangeline Scores

A swift-moving story of polo and another great game by the gifted author of "The Spy Pilot."

By KINGSLEY MOSES

EVANGELINE sat down smartly and skidded gently against the goal post; thereby she scraped her hunkers somewhat, but saved her mouth. Jazz Harrell was a heavy-handed mug, but a high-handicap player.

Mr. Harrell grunted at his iron-gray mount. "Dammit, you will, will you!" But he didn't yank her head.

Evangeline knew he wouldn't—this time, anyway. She didn't like Harrell a little bit; but she had carried him plenty and knew his ways. The white willow ball had rolled square between the posts as the rider tapped it. That made it four to two in America's favor with the close of the seventh chukker. That ought to put the game on ice. At back, the great Milbank could nurse a lead like nobody's business.

"Gaw stroike me," said the roan Limey as he and Evangeline cantered toward the line of grooms together. "You perishin' Yanks 'ave all the luck!"

Some folks say horses can't talk: well, I wonder what they think of the funny noises we humans make?

"Be your age, Brick-top," the gray mare told him. "If you hadn't flinched when your man poked near-side for that play my man would never've got on it."

The roan Limey bared yellow teeth and nipped at the gray mare's ear; but Lord Wooding was dismounting at the moment and a nut-faced cockney groom snapped the roan's head around. "Of all the ruddy slackers I ever see—" The groom would have smacked Limey's muzzle had he not caught the cold warning in Wooding's eye.

Anyone with a keen eye for polo knew that the roan had swerved ever so slightly in that last run for the gently rolling willow ball.

"I hope we meet again. You're duck soup for a real polo pony," Evangeline whickered. A colored swipe was blanketing her.

Words—if any—failed the roan; he contented himself with stepping deliberately on his groom's thinly shod foot—this time getting himself the deserved slapping.

Sure enough, the game was "on ice." But the iron-gray mare Evangeline watched the play of the last period with a deceptive tranquillity. Her six-year-old cream-colored son was playing this last seven and a half minutes—playing for the Britishers. Tie that, can you! But Lord Wooding had had the money to buy the cream-colored Tippy.

But for all that Tippy was the fastest animal on the field in this last chukker; and despite the fact that Wooding tried and tried again, there was no getting past that great back, Milbank. His sweeping near-side backhands thrice swept the ball away from the lip of the Americans' goal. And the first international contest ended at 4 to 2, where Evangeline and the roan Limey had left it. . . .

Three riders were walking their horses along the sun-stippled path which winds through the woods beyond Piping Rock. Harrell and Lord Wooding were the men, and the girl between them was Honor Willoughby, who owned the acres where the trail ran.

Both men, on their Irish hunters,—big, raw-boned beasts

of abundant substance,—towered above their hostess. For this afternoon Miss Willoughby was riding the cream-colored polo pony Tippy, which had once been her own property.

"Dashed decent of you, y'know, to let me have that little beast, Honor." His Lordship had to reach down to scratch Tippy's crest with the end of his crop. "He's got more foot than anything on the field—"

"Too dashed decent!" interrupted Harrell. "I maintain Honor's unpatriotic. Sportsmanship, up to a certain point, is all very well; but selling you this pony, Wooding—why, it's lending aid and comfort to the enemy!" The tone of Harrell's words

was light, but the expression upon his face, tanned to a mahogany brown, with knobby jaws and flattened nose, was not altogether agreeable. Stock market and racing stud to bridge and backgammon, Herb Harrell played always to win—and made no bones about it. He had been known to aver that a "good loser" is just another name for a "quitter." But Harrell wasn't a good winner either.

"Piles it on a bit thick!" Wooding had said to Honor Willoughby earlier in the day after Harrell had talked polo—and how to play polo—the whole enduring luncheon hour.

Harrell, as a matter of fact, had taken it almost as a personal insult when Honor had sold Tippy to Lord Wooding. The hard-boiled American No. 1 had no patience with the reports that the visitors were not as well mounted as the home team. If they couldn't breed, buy or borrow polo ponies what did they come over here for? So when the girl let His Lordship have perhaps the best little horse in her string, Harrell hadn't hesitated to tell her that he thought her damned sentimental.

Honor just let it lie. The cream-colored Tippy was hers to dispose of as she pleased; and she'd always done just about as she desired. Also, she was lending Tippy's dam to Harrell.

Now, therefore, loafing along with Tippy only on a snaffle, the girl did not choose to discuss the matter further with her somewhat tiresome guest. She had only tolled him along as an antidote to Wooding, or *vice versa*. Both men persisted in being rather annoyingly squashy. Honor wasn't in the least in a marrying mood. Just now she was pretty well convinced that she had about everything one woman could want. She got lonely at times, with no one but twenty servants to talk to; but her horses and her huge farm and her investments denied her the dubious luxury of too much introspection; and the evidence her mirror daily gave her was beyond reproach or cabil.

Probably, sometime, she would marry some one. One

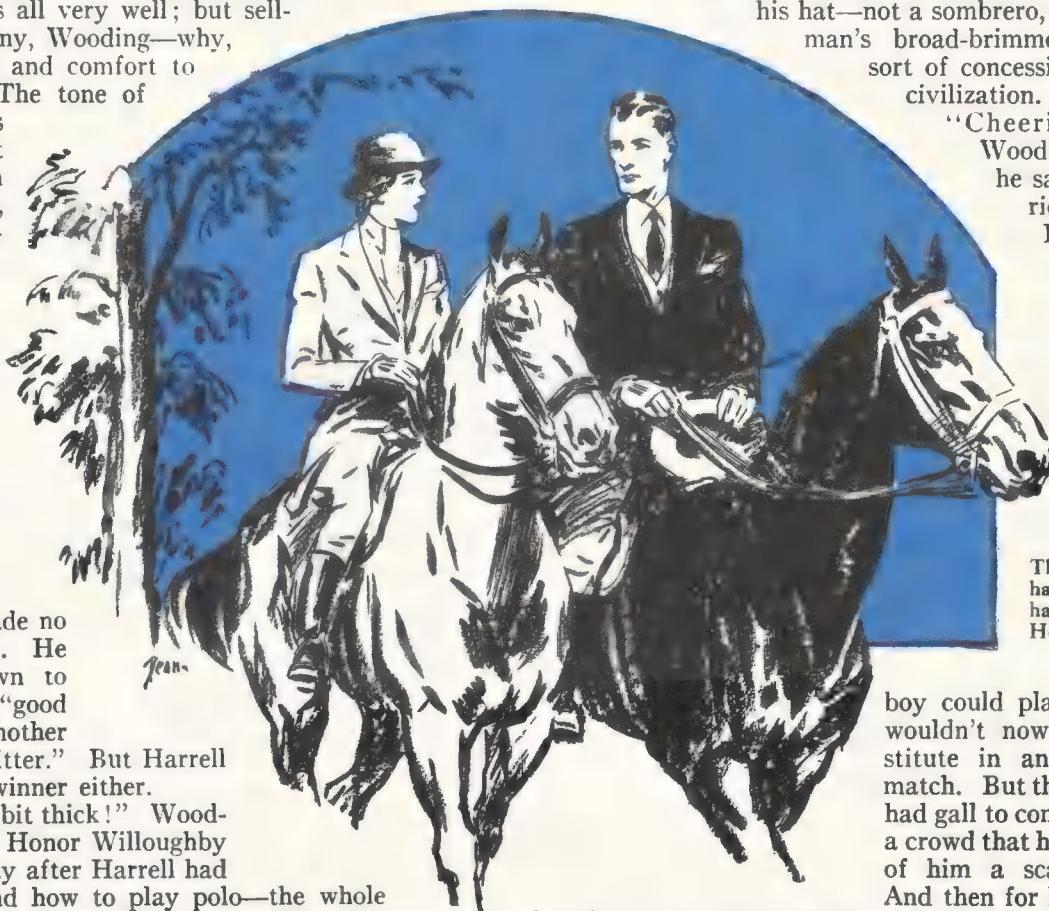
did. But Honor didn't get much emotional "kick" out of the idea. Not now, anyway: neither the horse-facedly handsome Wooding, nor the hard-riding, hard-hitting Harrell.

There was, though, that boy from the South—Texas, or was it Arizona or Nevada? Yes, Sam Dallas was—

Why, here he was! His piebald, which he insisted on calling a "paint hoss," came fox-trotting through the sun-striped shadows.

"Howdy!" The young outlander swept off his hat—not a sombrero, but a cavalryman's broad-brimmed felt, as a sort of concession to Eastern civilization.

"Cheerio, Dallas!" Wooding hailed, as he saluted with his riding-crop, but Harrell only grunted. The



The young squirt had gall to take to hanging around Honor Willoughby!

boy could play polo, or he wouldn't now be first substitute in an international match. But the young squirt had gall to come butting into a crowd that had never heard of him a scant year ago. And then for him to take to hanging around Honor Willoughby!

So Harrell was even more annoyed when the girl put her pony suddenly forward, and said to young Dallas: "Right about. This path's too narrow for three abreast anyway."

Harrell and Wooding had a fine view of the croups of Tippy and the piebald all the way back to Honor's place.

There the usual Sunday afternoon party gathered, chattered and split up into congenial groups. The lady of the manor played hostess for a while, nibbling and sipping with everyone. But as soon as she might Honor slipped away and found Sam Dallas where she thought he'd be.

A formal, three-sided hedge of ancient boxwood formed a hidden nook from which one could look out across the twilight waters of the harbor. There was a single gray stone bench there, with cushions striped in the violet, black and white of the Willoughby racing colors. Several times in the short fortnight they had known each other Honor and Sam Dallas had drifted there to sit and smoke, usually in silence. Sure enough, Sam was present. Long, a trifle awkward and bow-legged, he rose, pulling his pipe from his teeth.

"Honor, I'm wastin' my time," he said abruptly.

"With me?" she laughed at him, jamming her hands in her breeches' pockets and teetering back on her heels. The sun had set, but the aureate glow of the sky made the light vivid.

The girl felt her face unduly hot. She wasn't accustomed to blushing; but this wild Western—what do they call 'em—cowman, was assaying her as impersonally as if she were a filly he had a mind to purchase. He continued his calm scrutiny: a lot of copper-colored hair, wound in a braid around her head, coronet fashion, hazel eyes with lights of amber in them, short straight nose, rather tilted, a round, firm chin and a full underlip—a lip which was rich crimson now, but could whiten and draw to a straight line upon occasion. Not a weak woman, Honor Willoughby.

"No. You're about all that's worthwhile here." He banged his pipe on his boot-heel, refilled it, and sat down. "Got ten minutes to talk, Honor?"

She came and sat beside him, patting her long black boots with her riding-crop.

Slowly he told her about his ranch in southeast Texas—his cattle, his horses, and the farm. "Some call me just a granger; my friends give me '*stockman*.'"

"Then you're not really poor?"

"Not for Texas. But up here— You know how many ponies of my own I've got with me?"

"Five, haven't you?"

"Two of 'em that don't know enough yet to change lead; one still pivots forehand. Fellows in the club are lending me most I ride."

"What of it? We've had more than one internationalist who didn't own even one pony. If Milbank thinks you're good enough for the squad it's up to the club to mount you."

"I don't look at it so." He had to refill his pipe again. His manner was placid enough, but he was smoking far too fast.

"I aim to pay my way," he snorted, "wherever!"

She put one hand on his arm. "Don't get so noble, Sam—!"

People were coming down the path beyond the boxwood screen. Honor's party was evidently drifting away; but she felt no obligation to bid them a formal good-by—everyone went milling about from one house to another all the time. Women's voices chattered behind the two on the stone bench. Then two men passed, walking slowly.

"Milbank's been hit by democracy," Harrell's voice said. "He wants to play to the papers: '*Cowboy from the West*'— Bull!"

"Jolly odd, it does seem, in powlo!"

Honor knew that was Parr-Pipitone, the English No. 2.

"The blighter's no more than a groom," the clear, almost falsetto voice carried on. "Though, of course, it's your chaps' option—though cadging a horse here and there and what-not—"

"Hell, I'm not for it!" growled Harrell. They went beyond hearing.

"Well?" Sam Dallas said, and got up and stretched himself.

Honor's mouth was a thin line. Anger blurred her words. "Harrell seems to've forgotten he's using two of my ponies! I'll remind him."

"Now, now, don't cripple the team." Tall Sam was the least upset of the two.

"To hell with the team!" said Honor.

BUT the next afternoon when the squad of America's team was supposed to report for a gentle breather on the practice-field behind the towering blue stands, Dallas did not put in an appearance.

"Wild and woolly Westerner," suggested Carl Cates, America's No. 2. "Probably gone off and got boiled. Honor turned him down flat, maybe. I saw them out by the boxwood last evening, desperately serious."

"What's that?" Harrell wheeled in on a squatty chestnut. "Honor and that Dallas twirp?"

Cates, who was only a kid, nodded. "Oh, very heavy stuff there."

"Behind the boxwood! Huh! Maybe that explains why Honor's been so good as to withdraw her ponies from my string."

"No, she can't do that," Captain Milbank ejaculated. "The day before the match! Why, I'll go up and talk to her, Harry!"

"—*Where mortals fear to tread*—" said Kippy Kendall, No. 3. He stood in his stirrups and walloped a dented ball a hundred and twenty yards across the green turf. The others' restive ponies stretched their necks and lined out after it.

THE news of Miss Willoughby's high-handed action arrived at the stables even before Harrell announced it to his team-mates. Grooms, trainers and lowly swipes went into informal conference about it, seated on upturned buckets or squatting against the sunny wall.

Gig Galway, Harrell's stableman, naturally led the radical wing. "The devil fly aff wid her: would she give the game to the Sassenachs?"

Over the half doors a dozen sleek, equine heads surveyed the convention. The wise eyes of Evangeline might have indicated that she was well aware she was the topic of discussion. She held her peace and munched hay, though she wondered how come she'd missed her morning's breather.

Honor's head groom, Mr. Cattersall, who had no use for the Irish anyway, suggested sourly that Galway "stow it." "You've never knaowed your plyce, Galway," he asserted. "Leave your tongue off a lydy."

Gig flared up ready to fight but restrained himself only with the greatest difficulty when he remembered that any disturbance on the eve of an international match would result not only in his summary discharge but, probably, in his blacklisting by the Polo Association. He discreetly turned his attention to Dallas' colored swipe, Slewfoot Beauregard.

"Our bet'll be aff then, dinge," he suggested.

"I don' assimilate yuh," said Slewfoot coldly. "You bet yo' man makes mo' goals than anybody on the American team. Ah say he don't—fo' ten dollahs. That goes. Mis-tah Cattahsall's holdin' the money. Aint it the truf!"

"The stykes," agreed Mr. Cattersall, "ave been pried with that hexplicit hunderstanding."

"Arragh, go on. If Harrell ain' got the mounts—"

"That," observed Mr. Cattersall, who was a man of culture and education, "is hextraneous, hunapposite and irrelevant. Two quid a side 'as been properly powsted with me. Mr. 'Arrell, as Number One, 'as every hopportunity for scoring. It's 'is mytes' job to feed 'im the ruddy ball. The bet stands, Mr. Galway; an' you've no call gettin' shirty abaht it."

Then at eleven o'clock on the morning of the match Colonel Milbank—who detested the machine age and all its products—trotted cross-country toward the club for an early luncheon. The green hunter he rode refused a puny three-bar fence. Milbank stubbornly put him at it, and the horse fell. The captain of the American team got to his feet with his right wrist hopelessly broken.

Upon that there was of course, a perfect panic of telephoning and conferring.

Harrell could be shifted from No. 1 to back, for he was at home in either position. Cates and Kendall would remain at 2 and 3. But they simply had to have Sam Dallas to play up front. No one else had nearly Sam's skill in poking the ball through the posts.

But Sam was missing. At the cottage where he had boarded it was reported that Mr. Dallas had left at eleven-thirty in his yellow roadster. Yes, he had taken his suitcases with him. Gone.

By this time it had gotten on to noon. Three carloads of polo officials whirled up to Honor Willoughby's. This was no time for delicacy or for pampering a young woman's pride. "You'd be the one who'd know where he went, Honor," growled Milbank—his wrist throbbing damnable. "Get him."

"I didn't even know he was gone."

In a heather-colored tweed mesh, with a loose-knotted jade green scarf, she faced this delegation stiffly, almost defiantly.

"Well, he is," snapped the international captain. "Blew off in his roadster at eleven-thirty. You know more about his habits than anyone else. Raise him for us; and bring him back here. Game's called for three o'clock."

Honor's pretty mouth was thin-lipped and firm enough now. She hesitated; then snapped her fingers as an idea dawned.

"Maybe. I'll try. Got to phone."

"We'll wait."

She jerked her head and, ignoring the downstairs extensions, vanished toward the upper story, leaving the men to the ministrations of the butler.

Beyond the closed door of her bedroom she bit out a Long Island City number.

"Captain MacDonald? . . . Well, get him, please; it's urgent. —Mac? It's Honor Willoughby. . . . Yes, I need help, badly. Listen."

Charles Stuart MacDonald had been born the son of the Willoughbys' gardener. He had been Honor's childhood hero. At the age of ten she had thought him the handsomest man in the world, in his brand-new uniform as a rookie patrolman. He was perhaps as true a friend as the rather lonely girl had ever had.

"Mac," she told him, "do something for me quick."

"Felonious, likely," came the chuckle.

"More or less." She outlined the polo situation swiftly, disclosing Milbank's mishap. "And what we've got to do," she rushed on, "is put our finger on Sam Dallas. He'll be crossing the Queensboro Bridge any time now—it's the only route he knows in and out of New York. Your men can spot him easily: lanky, sunburned Southerner—big hat—yellow roadster."

"And the charge?" inquired Captain MacDonald. "Desertion?"

"Don't be an ass! Make it any charge; speeding—"

"That won't do. Only give him a ticket."

"Oh, you cops are dumb! Listen— Oh, I know—talk ugly to him. He's from Texas. He'll hit somebody. You can hold him for hitting an officer, can't you?"

"And how! But, Miss Honor—if there's an investigation of an arrest like that—"

"There'll be no investigation, you dear old dumbbell. Just keep him till I get to the station-house. And, Mac, take a couple of good men with you and handle him firmly but gently. We want him in one piece for this afternoon."

"That all? Just compoundin' a felony?"

But Honor had hung up and was galloping downstairs. She hardly paused at the door of the smoke-filled drawing-room.

"Got him," she called, "—maybe!" Her skirts snapped as she ran to the garage. . . .

But when the Argentine umpire, Colonel Arriga, raised his hand to toss in the ball it was not Sam Dallas at No. 1. Billy Allan, a smart youngster from Yale—but a youngster—had been drafted to fill in at that last minute. Honor

Willoughby's bright idea hadn't clicked, evidently. Gossip and innuendo and all sorts of rumor of scandal ran rippling through the packed thousands in the long blue grandstands; reporters for tabloid journals fairly slavered as they scented sensation.

But the spectacle out on the green field soon monop-



Harrell, taking a long chance, pounced on the willow in midfield with one despairing wallop.

olized the attention of everyone. The English, in dark blue shirts, were pressing relentlessly. Three, and sometimes four, ponies streaked one after another toward the American goal. Harrell's head was continually twisted over his shoulder as he went back again and again to save with lofting back-hand swipes.

He could not get everything, however. A rifling shot, driven directly on a line, went right under his pony's muzzle at last, for the first score for England.

Save for the jubilation of little knots of visitors here and there the blue stands were glum with silence. This looked not only like a defeat, but a slaughter. The American four, with a novice up ahead and a back unaccustomed to team-play in the new position, was scattering all over the greensward. They rode and hit superbly; but no one knew where anyone else was going to be the next moment. There wasn't a vestige of team-work.

The next Billy Allan, trying too desperately hard, was guilty of a wild piece of cross-riding which instantly brought a penalty shot. Lord Wooding scored off that handily.

The score was 2 to 0 at the end of the first period.

"Ride 'em and ride 'em and ride 'em! That's all we

can do until we settle down," Harrell, as acting captain, begged his men. "They're running us ragged now, but if we can hold 'em awhile—"

White shirts already dark with sweat, the four Americans went desperately back to the contest. They spurred their ponies relentlessly; poked and hooked and bumped as they tried to glue themselves to the blue-shirted Britishers. Cates and Kippy Kendall were playing the game of their lives, and throughout that chukker smeared up every long shot designed to reach the enemy No. 1, Major Halloran.



But in the third period Halloran again got away—or rather completely fooled Harrell by pretending to miss as the American back thundered down upon him, then whirling his mount in a pretty pirouette, and patting the ball thirty yards between unprotected goal posts.

The only light of relief came just before the half-time whistle when Harrell, taking a long chance, pounced on the willow in mid-field and with one despairing wallop lifted a terrific shot for a hundred and fifty yards so that it just dribbled in for a tally.

With the score 3 to 1 in the Englishmen's favor, and an organization which didn't seem to have the slightest instinct for team-play, there did not seem to be the least hope for the American side.

Tired, discouraged riders slid off their mounts at the American horse lines.

Gig Galway, with a wet, black saddle on his hip, was the only individual who could summon a sly grin. "Where's your ten bucks, Slewfoot?" he jeered Dallas' deserted darky.

Slewfoot had nothing to say. He guessed what had happened to his beloved "Cap'n"—was used to the Texan's pride and hot temper. After a while, the colored boy knew, the boss would send transportation for himself and the horses; then they'd get away from society white-folks and uppity stable-hands. An' welcome!

Meanwhile Slewfoot hadn't a jit; no-count yellow Northern boys had seven-eleven him out of his last nickel. And as for winning the bet deposited with the elegant Mr. Cattersall—well, it looked like Harrell was the only man who could get any goals at all in this woeful ruckus.

So with nothing at all to do—and an indefinitely long time to do it in—Slewfoot settled himself to doze against the sunny side of the far stable where the Dallas string had not even been unblanketed. The horn that startled him to his feet might have been the trump of Gabriel.

No. Far better than that! The boss and the boss' lady friend!

"Get Salazar ready for the sixth period," Dallas directed shortly, without introduction or explanations. "I'm ridin' Miss Willoughby's—" The hard handsome face, somewhat marred now by a split lip and a blackened left eye, turned from the darky to the flushed girl at his side. Man and girl grinned at each other delightedly.

"I'm riding the Evangeline mare this chukker," Sam finished.

"Yo' playin', Cap'n? Praise be!"

Dallas had ducked into the clubhouse to change; while Milbank, with his one good arm around Honor, almost carried the dusty, disheveled girl to a box opposite midfield.

Dallas, Cates, Kennedy, Harrell: the reorganized American team took the

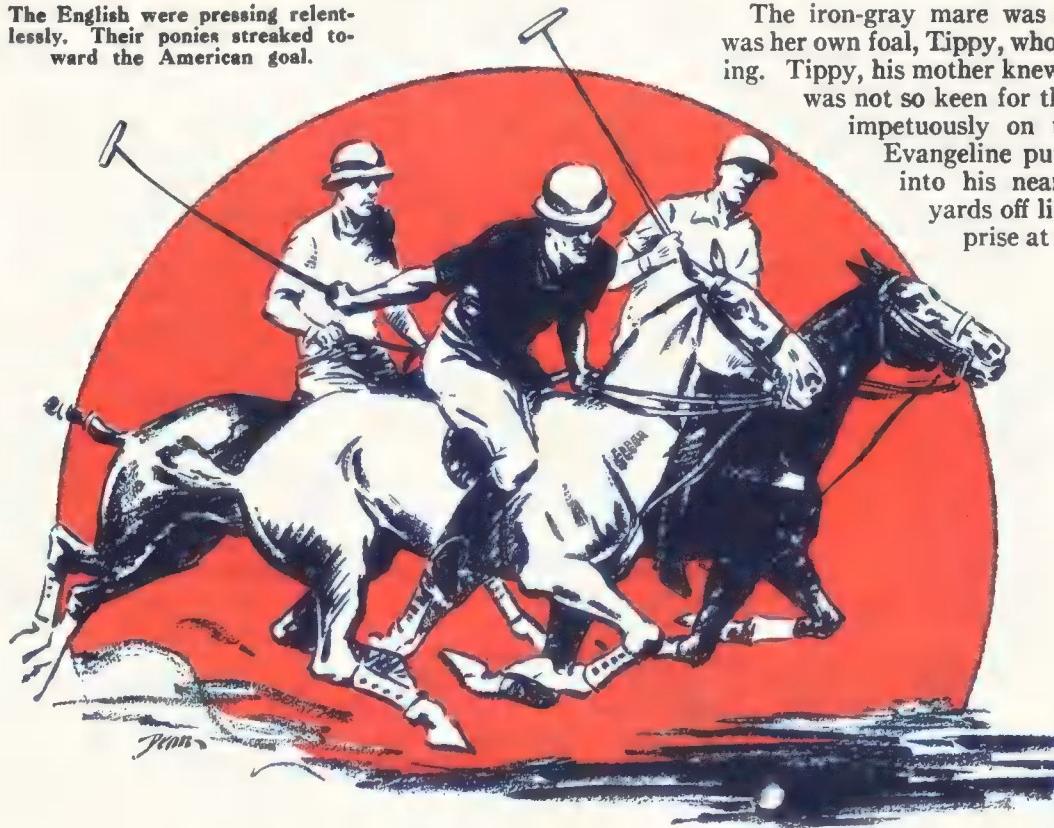
field for the last half as a rippling murmur, rising gradually to a great roar of relief, billowed and rolled around the blue stands. Here was a hope, at least; for the newspapers—as Harrell had pointed out—had indeed dramatized Sam Dallas into a sort of picturesque, savage superman. The reckless centaur from the wild West was a new figure in the select squadrons of polo.

And with the opening throw-in the hope seemed in a fair way to be realized. The handy Evangeline mare skipped and skittered and zigzagged her way with uncanny precision. She kept her own nose—and Sam Dallas' mallet—on the ball almost constantly. And Cates and Kennedy were feeding up nicely, leaving Harrell with little to do. They were settling down to the game, passing accurately and deftly to each other, instead of merely trying to slug out of danger.

Finally Cates, far over to the right, centered the ball beautifully. Lord Wooding and Kennedy were nearer the stationary ball than Sam Dallas was. But Kennedy's husky thoroughbred bay leaned into the British back's mount so heartily that the English pony was pressed clear around in a half-circle. Sam, merely cantering in, took the ball all alone and babied it through the goal posts.

Through the sixth chukker there was no more scoring; but in the seventh stanza Sam returned Kippy Kennedy's compliment, jarred Parr-Pipitone over the boards, blocked off Wooding, and let Kennedy score on a neat angling volley.

The English were pressing relentlessly. Their ponies streaked toward the American goal.



That tied up the score at three-all. Seven and a half minutes more likely would tell the story. Forty thousand onlookers chattered and cheered and argued. You could feel the beat and quiver of the excitement of the crowd as distinctly as you could hear the throb of the airplane engines which circled high in the turquoise sky overhead.

The only group which preserved almost absolute silence were those half dozen polo veterans with Honor Willoughby in the center-field box.

"It's up to your man, Honor," was about the only comment the gray-faced Milbank had made. "The others are behind him now. If he gets one opportunity, one opening—"

She had merely nodded, appearing not even to notice the use of the possessive adjective *your*. There was more than a polo game involved here for Honor.

The ball went in once more—it had gone out of play over the side-boards—and again the eight men were after it.

Harrell fouled in desperation at the mouth of his own goal, then daringly stopped Parr-Pipitone's free hit with his own bare left hand—a baseball play, if ever there was one.

The useful Kennedy swooped in and caromed to the right side-boards. The English No. 3 overrode, and Cates picked up the shot and laced it straight down the center. Sam went after it hard. But Wooding had twenty yards' lead; he took his time, and, with a full whirl of his mallet, sent the ball flying eight feet high in the air, and directly at Sam's face.

Actually there wasn't time to dodge. The ball flew like a light-flash from a heliograph. But Sam did get his face down so that the willow sphere cracked on the top of his helmet and ricocheted almost straight forward. Glancing blow that it had been, Sam momentarily felt as if he'd been sandbagged.

Just for an instant, though, was he at a loss what to do, and that, it so happened, didn't matter. For he had Evangeline under him again for this decisive last chukker.

The iron-gray mare was at no loss, particularly as it was her own foal, Tippy, who was now carrying Lord Wooding. Tippy, his mother knew, could run like a whippet, but was not so keen for the rough stuff. So, as he came impetuously on to get at the bouncing ball, Evangeline put her right knee and shoulder into his near elbow and jarred him five yards off line. Wooding gulped with surprise at this football maneuver; but he had lost the chance for the ball by this time, and Kennedy and Parr-Pipitone were jostling each other for it.

"Dirty work, Ma!" Tippy may have remarked.

"Be your age, kid," Evangeline probably retorted. "This is polo."

They played Badminton with the ball then for about four precious minutes. Both Wooding and Harrell were extra cautious and played close to their own posts; the other six—blue shirts and white—battered and bumped one another in the hundred-yard center zone of

the field. Whenever the ball popped out for any distance the English or American back pounced on it promptly and sent it winging like a golf shot.

"Ninety seconds—about," breathed Milbank to the silent girl beside him. She had not spoken a word throughout the frenzied period, but, with gloved hands tightly gripping the rail in front of her, had been swaying slowly backward and forward, nothing at all in her consciousness now save the terrific tension of this battle.

Anybody's game—anybody's— Ah, look!

The white ball slithered out of the milling scrimmage and went sliding to within twenty yards of the British goal posts. Some one, somehow in that churning mass of riders, had got a chance for a fair, clean shot.

But the wary Wooding was back by his own goal line, circling, ready. Like a lance he came out now, streaking forward astride the cream-colored Tippy. Another man, though, rode to meet him—Sam Dallas on the gray mare Evangeline.

Like jousting knights at the storied carnivals of Camelot the two riders bore straight at each other, each trying to force his opponent to swerve ever so little. Polo veterans knew that, at the very last stride, both ponies would give just enough to permit their men to get a free swipe at the ball; but, to the average spectator, it looked like a head-on disaster.

You could hear the low groan from the stands.

Neither man had an inch of advantage. But patently they did not intend to play the same sort of shot. Sam's mallet, held stiffly backward, was no higher than Evangeline's hocks. Lord Wooding's stick was aloft, ready for a full circle smash. He wanted to clear that ball far and safe out into mid-field. One accurate, well-centered tap was all Sam needed.

Foam whipped from the black nostrils of both cannonading horses. Both, sure enough, gave a trifle just before the instant of impact. Wooding's white mallet whirled down: simultaneously Sam's mallet-head swept forward. The sticks crashed together like broadswords.

Amazingly, the ball hardly moved from the spot where it rested, but just spun round and round dizzily. The mallet-heads must have met at precisely the same moment.

Both riders, of course, were aware that they had as good as missed. The goal had not been scored; but the goal was still in danger.

And both Evangeline and her son Tippy were equally aware of what had happened. Both animals were long-schooled to the game; both knew therefore that the ball must be behind them. Each took its own way of remedying the matter.

Evangeline, as was her habit, sat down and slid. Tippy went up on his hindlegs and whirled almost as if he would back-fall. Each horse came around about five yards distant from the ball which was still spinning lazily there in the grass. It was a back-hand shot now for each rider. And, once more, though with hardly any momentum at all, the two horses met.

But the mallets did not clash this time. Evangeline chose to employ a little trick of her own devising. She bent her neck to the left; then swinging her head like a hammer, she banged it against Tippy's jowl. Both mallets were caught between the horses.

Tippy, with a badly cut lip, staggered a pace away, blindly.

Sam's knee, caught in the crash, sent a sharp stab through his right leg. But he hardly sensed it as he dizzyly searched for the missing ball.

He had to get it now, and quickly. All six of the other players were swooping down for a grand mêlée. And Wooding might be in again at any instant.

But Sam could not locate the ball. It was neither ahead nor behind, off-side or near-side.

"Under you!" came a roar—Harrell, that was, charging in. Seeing his opportunity, the big back had come clear down the field, out-riding the others with the advantage of the flying start he had.

"Block Wooding! Get over!" yelled Harrell.

Right! Sound sense! Just keep the Englishman out, and Harrell would have a set-up—and the game!

Sam's leg tried to press his mare sidewise to block off Wooding. Had he cleared the ball now, Sam wondered, as Harrell scraped right along his bridle hand. Harrell's stick had swung down anyhow.

Yes—sure! Trundling along deliberately, the white ball bumped over the white goal line. The game!

Then Sam saw Harrell's face. The man sat back in his saddle, holding his mallet straight upright, butt on pommel as if it were a guidon.

"Yours, Jazz?" gasped the galloping umpire from the Argentine, as he arrived in the very midst of the troop of players.

"No." Harrell shook his big head. "My oath, I never touched it!"

"Verdad!" The astonished official relapsed into his native tongue. "But how—"

"By pony—Dallas' pony. The little beast did it on purpose!"

"Who knows?" said Colonel Arriga.

There wasn't much more to the game. The English put

on a gallant and desperate drive in the last sixty seconds that was left. But they never worked the ball free; and play was over.

Sam Dallas went straight to Milbank's box and jammed through the jubilant crowd which surrounded the crippled captain.

There, in front of observant thousands, he put his arm round Honor, lifted her clear of the ground and kissed her.

"My word!" quoth an English male. "What ho—and all that!"

"Ow!"—a female echo. "How vehray extrahdin'ry—rahilly!"

"It's quite all right," Honor reassured them. "You see, he's my husband."

That took some telling too. Police Captain MacDonald's men had done their work capably, if not so very smoothly—as was attested by Sam's wounded lip and eye. But the Texan had been properly wrathful.

He had not cooled off thoroughly even by the time Honor arrived; and the information that his predicament was a matter of her own private manufacture didn't particularly pacify him. As for accepting her ponies and filling in for the American side—not—no—never! No Dallas that ever lived had been a pampered parasite—He, in fact, put it much plainer.

So Honor was forced to play her ace. "If you married me, Sam," she proposed through the unromantic bars of the cell, "they'd be *our*—not *my*—ponies!"

"Mean it?" he had answered.

"Try me."

"Hi, lemme out!"

"Mac, be a lamb?" she begged, as she had summoned Captain MacDonald.

But they'd had to go clear across the bridge and downtown to City Hall before Sam would head back toward Meadowbrook.

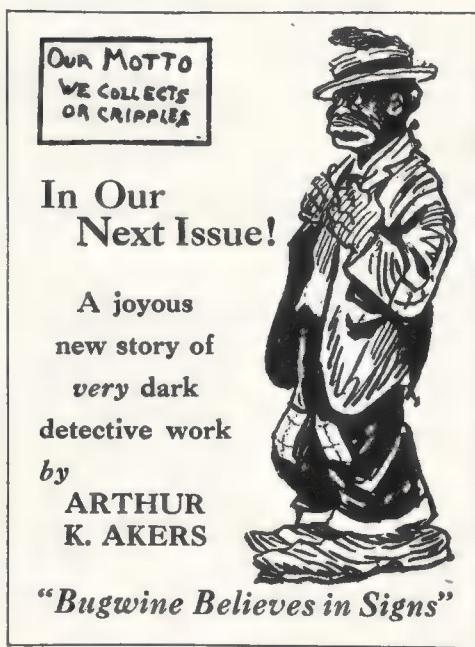
Down in the stables that twilight the sable Slewfoot rejoiced as he pouched his well-won twenty dollars. Gig Galway still protested the stakeholder's ruling. But Mr. Cattersall had pointed out that "more" meant "more."

"Mr. 'Arrell, 'e mykes one goal; Mr. Kennedy, 'e mykes one goal; Mr. Dallas, 'e mykes one goal; an' one's myde by the ruddy powny. So your bleedin' Mr. 'Arrell, me lad,"—he shook his forefinger in Gig's dished face,—"don't myke no *more* goals than anyone—not even the powny."

Evangeline and her son, quartered in adjacent stalls that night, must surely have eavesdropped on that conversation. For Evangeline snorted into her oats and sprayed yellow kernels all over the husks of her bedding. "Pony—my skewbald sire!" she commented rather bitterly. "A decent old lady like me!"

"Harrell talks about ponies—in a place called 'theater,'" Tippy suggested with a worldly-wise air. "They're little and fast on their feet—and generally sort o' pretty. Aint that you, Ma?"

"Don't be so flip," said Evangeline. And she bunted her stalwart son's nose-bag so that the last mouthful went into the cornhusks.



*The captivating story of
a young American's
amazing adventure in
the stronghold of a for-
gotten people in remote
Cambodia.*

By
**EDGAR RICE
BURROUGHS**



The Land of Hidden Men

The Story Thus Far :

KING'S Cambodian guide had refused to accompany the adventurous American farther into the jungle. "There are wild elephants there," protested the Cambodian, "and tigers, and panthers which hunt by day as well as by night. And there are other things deep in the jungle, my lord, that no man may look upon and live."

"What, for example?" demanded King.

"The ghosts of my ancestors," answered the Cambodian, "—the Khmers who dwelt here in great cities ages ago. Within the dark shadows of the jungle the ruins of their cities still stand, and down the dark aisles of the forest pass the ancient kings and warriors, and little sad-faced queens on ghostly elephants. Fleeing always from the horrible fate that overtook them in life, they pass forever down the corridors of the jungle, and with them are the millions of the ghostly dead who once were their subjects. We might escape the tiger and wild elephants, but none may look upon the ghosts of the Khmers, and live."

Impatient of the Cambodian's fears, Gordon King left him and set out into the jungle alone. King was a young American who had recently graduated in medicine. Having an independent income he had decided to devote himself for a number of years to the study of strange maladies. For the moment he had permitted himself to be lured from his hobby by the intriguing mysteries of the Khmer ruins of Angkor—ruins that had worked so mightily upon his imagination that it had been impossible for him to with-

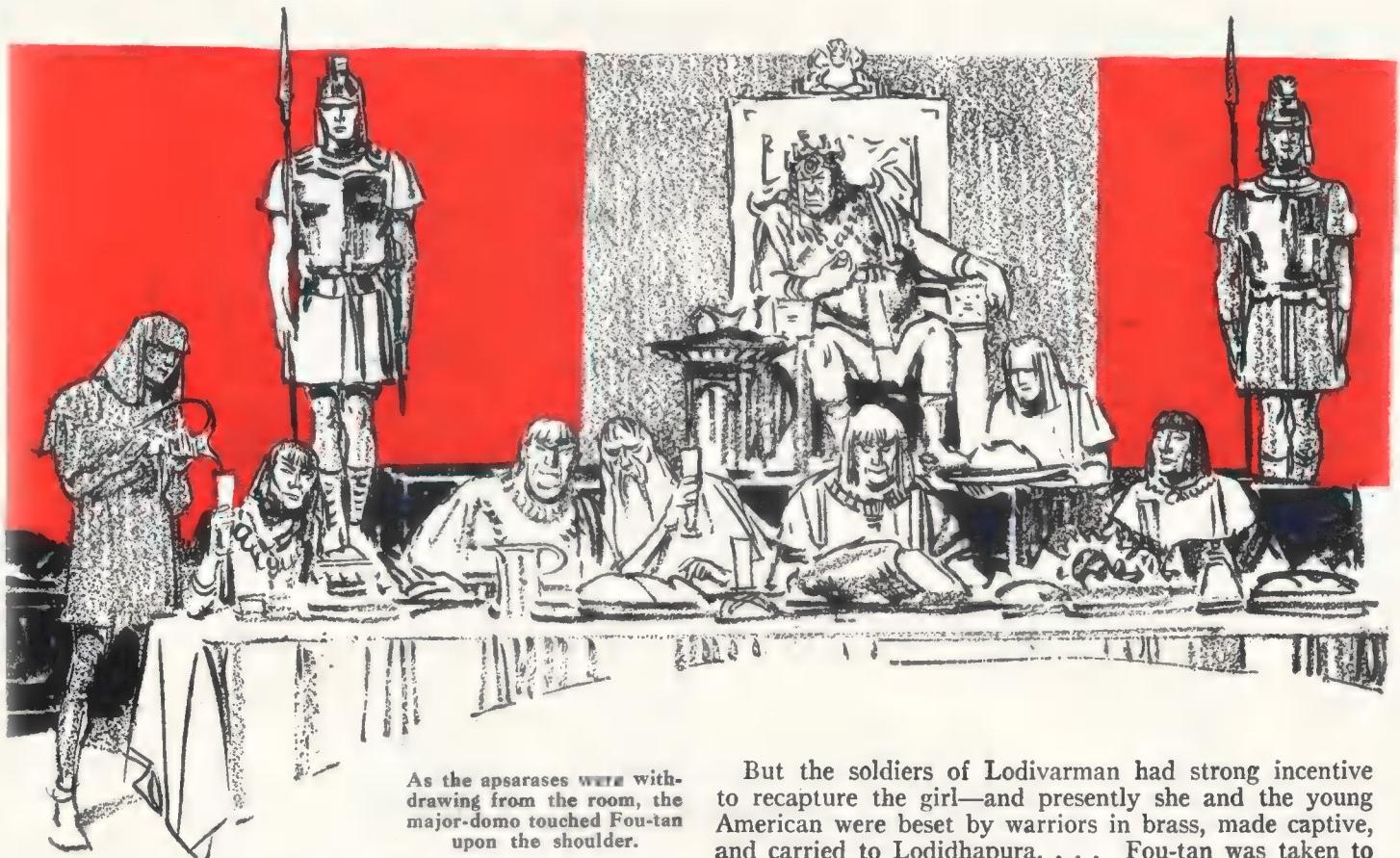
stand the temptation of some independent exploration on his own account. . . .

It was not long indeed, before King actually did come upon a vast vine-grown ruin of an ancient city. But already he was hopelessly lost, for a fall had broken his compass, and the thick growth made sight of the sun impossible. He spent the next seven days in desperate wandering, keeping alive by shooting wild pig and other game, and in constant danger from leopard and tiger and cobra.

And then one day when fever was already making him dizzy, he saw far down a jungle aisle an elephant preceded and followed by marching warriors in brazen armor. King crawled back into the concealing underbrush. The caravan passed within fifty feet of him, but he heard no sound. There were archers and spearmen—brown men with cuirasses of burnished brass. Then came the elephant trapped in regal splendor, and in a gorgeous howdah upon its back rode a girl of exquisite and exotic beauty, but with sad face and frightened eyes. Behind her marched other warriors and presently all were gone down the aisles of the jungle in spectral silence.

"Weeping queens on misty elephants! Gad!" he exclaimed. "What weird tricks fever plays upon one's brain! I could have sworn that what I saw was real."

Slowly he staggered to his feet and pushed on, but soon the fever had its will of him, and he collapsed. . . . Days later he came to his senses in the hut of a native hunter.



As the apsaras were withdrawing from the room, the major-domo touched Fou-tan upon the shoulder.

King gradually recovered his health and repaid the native's kindness by saving his small son from the attack of a leopard. King was still in difficulties, for a band of monkeys had stolen his weapons and clothing; but the skill in javelin-throwing of his college days now stood him in good stead; so, clad like the native in skins, and armed with bow-and-arrows and javelin, he too was able to fight off the giant beasts of the jungle.

Well for King that this was true. For soon he had the opportunity of rescuing a girl from the attack of a tiger—the very girl, moreover, whom he had seen passing in the howdah of the elephant.

"I am from Pnom Dhek," explained this girl Fou-tan, to King, "where Beng Kher is king. Pnom Dhek is a greater city than Lodidhapura; Beng Kher is a mightier king than Lodivarman."

"Bharata Rahon desired me. He wished to take me to wife. I pleaded with my father not to give me in marriage to Bharata Rahon, but he told me that I did not know my own mind."

"I knew that I must do something to convince my father that my mind and soul sincerely revolted at the thought of mating with Bharata Rahon, and so I conceived the idea of running away and going out into the jungle that I might prove that I preferred death to the man my father had chosen for me. . . .

"I became lost in the jungle; then I heard the heavy tread of an elephant and the clank of arms and men's voices. But when the warriors came within view, I saw that they wore the armor of Lodivarman, and I was terrified and tried to escape them, but they overtook me and great was their joy."

"'Lodivarman will reward us handsomely,' they cried, 'when he sees that which we have brought to him!'

"So I was taken to Lodidhapura, destined to become one of the many wives of Lodivarman. . . . But this would be even more terrible, for it is said that Lodivarman is a leper. And so again I contrived to make my escape."

But the soldiers of Lodivarman had strong incentive to recapture the girl—and presently she and the young American were beset by warriors in brass, made captive, and carried to Lodidhapura. . . . Fou-tan was taken to the royal palace; and King, because of his prowess with the javelin, was made one of the royal soldiers. His first and constant thought, however, was the rescue of Fou-tan. And from a high priest he had befriended, he learned where the girl was quartered. (*The story continues in detail:*)

TURNING quickly, he overtook the men just before they entered the barracks and touched one of them upon the shoulder. "May I have a word with you?" he said.

"I have no time. I am already late," replied the warrior.

"I shall be quick then," replied King. "Let me take your place on the guard tonight and I will give you all of my next pay."

Instantly the man was all suspicion. "That is a strange request," he said. "Most warriors would pay to be relieved of guard duty. What is your purpose?"

"There is a certain slave girl attached to the house of the king and tonight she will be looking for a certain warrior." And the American nudged the other in the ribs and gave him a sly wink.

The warrior's face relaxed into a grin. "It might go hard with us if we were caught," he said; "but, by Siva, three months' pay is not to be considered lightly. Quick! Get into your harness, while I explain the matter to the others of the ten. But be sure that you do not say anything about the pay, for if they knew that, each would want his share."

"You are doing it for friendship," said King with a laugh, as he hastened into the interior of the barracks. And as he hurriedly adjusted his cuirass and helmet the warrior whose place he was to take was explaining the matter to the other members of the ten, who received it with rough laughter and broad jokes.

At first the petty officer in command of the ten positively forbade the exchange and it was necessary for King to promise him a month's pay before he, at last, reluctantly acceded. "But remember," he admonished them, "I know nothing of it, for no such thing may be done with my knowledge."



"You fear me," said Lodivarman.
"They all fear me—but what can
they do? I am king!"

As the ten marched toward the house of the king the American's excitement increased, though outwardly he was calm. Just what he was going to do and just how he was going to execute it, the man could not know because he had no idea as to what obstacles would present themselves; or, upon the other hand, what good fortune might lie in store for him. He fully appreciated that his proposed action was unwise and ill-considered, and almost definitely doomed to defeat, but could he have turned back he would not have done so.

Presently they were halted at the king's house, a little to one side of the main entrance and before a low doorway. Other contingents of the guard were arriving from other barracks, while members of the old guard emerged from the low doorway and were formed for the brief ceremony that marked the change of the guard.

Immediately following the ceremony a number of the new guard was tolled off to relieve the sentries upon their posts about the grounds and within the interior of the palace.

King happened to be among these and as he was marched away he could not help but wonder what post Fate would select for him, though wherever it should be he determined that he would find the means for gaining access to the interior of the palace.

The detail of the guard was first marched to the far end of the wing and here a sentry was relieved who paced back and forth in front of a tiny doorway, shadowed by trees and shrubbery.

King thought that this would have been an excellent post, but it did not fall to him, and as they continued on about the wings of the palace, relieving sentry after sentry, he began to fear that he was not going to be posted at all; indeed, the detail traversed the outside of the entire wing and still the American had been assigned no post. At

last they came before the ornate entrance to the king's house, where ten men were detached from the detail to relieve those posted at this important post.

All of the sentries hitherto relieved were then marched away and King found himself one of five who had not as yet been posted. These, to the astonishment and gratification of the American, were marched into the palace. Three were detailed to posts in the long entrance corridor, while King and the other remaining warrior were marched to the entrance of a large and luxuriously furnished apartment. At one end of the chamber was a dais raised slightly above the floor level. Gorgeous rugs covered the dais and upon it stood a low table, upon which was laid a service of solid gold with bowls of fruit and sweetmeats, several massive golden jugs and ornately carved goblets. Behind the table was a pile of pillows covered with rich stuff, and over all a canopy of cloth of gold.

On the floor of the chamber below the dais was a long table, similarly though not so richly laid, and this was entirely surrounded by rich cushions.

On either side of the doorway, facing the interior of the room, stood King and his fellow warrior, two bronze statues cuirassed in burnished brass. For five minutes they stood there thus facing the empty chamber; then a door at the far side opened and a file of slaves entered, some twenty-five or thirty in all. Two of these took their places at opposite ends of the dais in rear of the table and the pillows, standing erect with arms folded and eyes staring straight to the front. The other slaves took similar positions at intervals behind the long table on the main floor and facing the dais. Between the table and the dais and facing the latter stood a richly garbed individual whom King mentally classified as a sort of major-domo.

Again there was a wait of several minutes, during which no one spoke or moved. Then, through the doorway which

King and his fellow guarded, a party of men entered the chamber. Some were warriors, cuirassed and helmeted in gold, while others were garbed in long robes of vivid hue, richly embroidered. Some of these wore fantastic head-dresses, several of which were over two feet in height.

These banquet guests formed in little groups behind the long table and engaged in low-toned conversation. There was no laughter now and they spoke scarcely above a whisper. It was as though a pall of gloom had enveloped them the instant that they entered the gorgeously appointed chamber. Almost immediately an arras at the rear of the dais was drawn aside, revealing a warrior of the guard, who sounded a fanfare upon a golden trumpet. As the last note died away the slaves in the chamber prostrated themselves, pressing their foreheads to the floor, while the guests knelt with bowed heads; then Lodivarman, the ill-favored king of Lodidhapura, came slowly through the opening at the rear of the dais. Only the trumpeter and the two guards at the door remained standing as Lodivarman advanced and seated himself upon the pillows behind his table. For a moment he looked about the apartment through his dull eyes and then, apparently satisfied, he struck his palms together a single time.

Immediately all in the apartment arose to their feet. The major-domo bowed low three times before the king. Each of the guests did the same and then, in silence, took their places at the banquet table. When all had been seated Lodivarman struck his palms together a second time and immediately the slaves stepped forward upon noiseless feet and commenced to serve the viands and pour the wine. A third time Lodivarman gave the signal, upon which the guests relaxed and entered into low-voiced conversation.

From his post at the entrance-way, Gordon King noticed the bountiful array of food upon the long banquet table. Only a few of the articles did he recognize, but it was evident that fruit and vegetables and meat were there in abundance, while the largest bowl upon the little table of the king was filled with mushrooms, aside from which there was little else upon Lodivarman's table other than fruit, sweet-meats and wine. From what King had previously seen of Lodivarman and from the gossip he had heard in the barracks he was aware that the monarch was so addicted to the use of mushrooms that the eating of them had become a fixed habit with him, almost to the exclusion of proper and natural food, and his taste for them was so inordinate that he had long since ordained them royal food, forbidden, under pain of death, to all save the king.

As the tiresome meal progressed the banqueters carried on their forced and perfunctory conversation, while Lodivarman sat silent and morose, his attention divided between his mushrooms and his wine. As King watched he could not but compare this meal with formal dinners he had attended in New York and Washington and he sympathized with the banqueters in the hall of Lodivarman, because he knew that they were suffering the same boredom that he had once endured, but with the advantage that they did not have to appear to be happy and gay.

PRESENTLY Lodivarman made a sign to the major-domo, who clapped his hands twice; immediately all eyes turned to a doorway at one side of the chamber, through which there now filed a company of apsarases. About the hips of each girl was a girdle of virgin gold, which supported a skirt that fell to within a few inches of her ankles. From her hips two stiff pointed panels of cloth bowed outward, falling almost to the floor. Above the hips their bodies were naked, except for rich armlets, breastplates and necklaces.

Their headdresses were fantastic contrivances that re-

sembled ornate candelabra; heavy ear-rings fell to their shoulders and above their bare feet were anklets of precious metal. A few wore masks of hideous design, but the painted lips and cheeks and darkened eyes of the majority of them were their only disguise. All of them were beautifully formed and many of them were pretty and there was one among them who was gorgeous in her loveliness. As the eyes of Gordon King fell upon her face, he felt his heart quicken, for she was Fou-tan. She had not seen him when she entered and now she danced with her back toward him, a dance that consisted of strange postures of the feet and legs, the hips, arms, hands and heads of the little dancers. As they went through the slow steps of the dance, they bent their fingers, their hands and their arms into such unnatural positions that Gordon King marveled, not only upon the long hours and days of practice that must have been necessary for them to perfect themselves, but also upon the mentality of an audience that could find entertainment in such a combination of beauty and grotesquery. That the dance was ritualistic and had some hidden religious significance was the only explanation that he could place upon it, yet even so he realized that it was fully as artistic and beautiful and intelligent as much of the so-called aesthetic dancing he had observed in modern America and Europe.

There were twenty apsarases taking part in the dance, but King saw only one—a lithe and beautiful figure that moved faultlessly through the long sequences of intricate and difficult posturing. Mad scheme after mad scheme passed through his mind as he sought for some plan whereby he might take advantage of their proximity to effect her release from the palace of the king, but each one must needs be discarded in the light of sober reflection. He must wait—but while he waited he planned and hoped.

AS the long dance drew to a close Gordon King saw Lodivarman beckon the major-domo to him and whisper briefly to that functionary. As the apsarases were withdrawing from the room the man hastened after them and touched Fou-tan upon the shoulder. He spoke to her and King could see the girl shrink. Lodivarman clapped his hands three times and again the slaves prostrated themselves and the guests knelt, while Lodivarman rose to his feet and walked slowly from the chamber through the same doorway by which he had entered. Immediately he was gone the guests arose and left the chamber, apparently only too glad to be released from the ordeal of a state banquet. The slaves began to gather up the dishes and bear them away, while the major-domo led Fou-tan across the chamber and up onto the royal dais, and bowed her into the doorway through which Lodivarman had disappeared.

Gordon King could scarce restrain himself as the full import of what he had just witnessed revealed itself to his tortured mind. Inclination prompted him to run across the chamber and follow Lodivarman and Fou-tan through that doorway of mystery, but again sane judgment interposed.

With the passing of the king and the guests, the American's fellow guardsman had relaxed. He no longer stood in statuesque immobility, but lounged carelessly against the wall watching the slaves bearing away the trays of unfinished food. "We would enjoy that more than the guests seemed to," he said to King, nodding toward the viands.

"Yes," replied the American, his mind upon other matters.

"I have stood guard here many times in the past," continued the warrior, "and never have I gone hungry after a banquet."

"I am not hungry now," said King shortly.

"I am," said the warrior. "Just beyond that door they stack up the dishes. If you will watch here I can go in there and eat all that I want."

"Go ahead," said the American.

"If you see an officer approaching, whistle once."

"If I see one I shall whistle. Go ahead," said King, seeing here a God-given opportunity to carry out the plan that the presence of the other warrior would have thwarted.

"It will not take me long," said the warrior, and with that he hurried quickly toward the little door through which the slaves were carrying the food.

Scarcely had the door closed behind his companion when King crossed the apartment and leaped to the dais. At the moment the chamber was empty, not even a single slave remaining within it, and there was no witness as the American parted the hangings and disappeared through the doorway which had swallowed Lodivarman and Fou-tan.

CHAPTER IX

IN THE HOUSE OF THE KING

THE major-domo led Fou-tan through a dimly lighted corridor to a small apartment not far from the banquet hall. The interior walls of thin sheet lead, hand-beaten upon great blocks of stone, were covered with paintings depicting scenes of war, the chase, the palace and the temple. There were spearmen and bowmen and great elephants trapped for war. A king, followed by his courtiers, rode down a tiger upon horseback and slew him with a spear. Countless apsaras posed in wooden postures of the dance. Priests in long robes and fantastic headdress marched in interminable procession toward a temple to Siva, and everywhere throughout the decorations of the chamber was the symbol of the Destroyer. Upon the floor were costly rugs and the skins of tigers and leopards. There were low tables with vessels containing fruits or sweets and statuary of pottery and stone. At one side of the chamber, depending from the ceiling by three chains, swung an elaborately carved vessel from which arose the smoke and the heavy fragrance of burning incense, while upon the floor was an abundance of cushions covered by rich embroidery of many hues. The whole apartment was a blaze of color, softened and subdued in the light of three cressets, burning steadily in the quiet air.

"Why have you brought me here?" demanded Fou-tan.

"It is the will of Lodivarman the king," replied the major-domo.

"I should be allowed three days to prepare myself," said the girl. "It is the custom."

The major-domo shook his head. "I know nothing beyond the orders I receive from Lodivarman," he said. "Customs are made by kings—and unmade."

Fou-tan looked apprehensively about her, taking in the details of the apartment. She saw that in addition to the door through which they had entered there was another door at one end of the room and that along one side of the room there were three windows, entirely covered now by the hangings that had been drawn across them. She moved uneasily about while the major-domo remained standing, always facing her. "Will you not be seated?" he asked.

"I prefer to stand," she replied, and then: "What are your orders?"

"To bring you here," replied the major-domo.

"And that was all?"

"That was all."

"Why was I brought here?" persisted the girl.

"Because the king ordered it," replied the man. "It is not for me to know or to seek to know more than the king divulges. I am but a servant."

For a time the silence of the room was broken only by the soft movements of the girl's skirt as she paced nervously the length of the gorgeous apartment that, had its walls been of cold granite, could have meant to her no more truly a prison.

Her thoughts were confused by the hopelessness of her situation. She had had no time to prepare for this, not in the sense of the preparation that was customary for a new bride for Lodivarman, but in a sterner, more personal sense. She had sworn to herself that she would die before she would submit to the loathsome embraces of the king, but having been taken thus unaware she had no means for death and now she concentrated every faculty of her ingenuity to discover some plan whereby she might postpone the fatal hour or find the means to liberate herself at once from the hateful crisis which she knew impended.

And then the door at the end of the room opened and Lodivarman entered. He halted just within the threshold, closing the door behind him, and stood thus for a moment in silence, his dull eyes upon her where, reacting unconsciously to a lifetime of training, she had gone on her knees before the king, as had the major-domo.

"Arise!" commanded Lodivarman, including them both in a gesture. Then he turned to the man. "You may go," he said. "See that no one enters this wing of the palace until I summon."

The major-domo, bowing low, backed from the room, closing the door softly as he departed. Then it was that Lodivarman advanced toward Fou-tan. He laid a hand roughly upon her naked shoulder as she shrank back involuntarily.

"You fear me," he said. "To you I am loathsome. They all fear me; they all hate me, but what can they do? What can you do? I am king."

"O King, I am helpless to save myself!" cried the girl. "You would make a leper of me—you who could save me!"

Lodivarman laughed. "Why should I spare you?" he demanded. "It was a woman who made me what I am. Let her sin be upon all women. The accursed creature! From that moment I have hated women. I shall tell you the story, that you may know how well women deserve whatever fate the gods may hold in store for you."

"I was many years ago. I was in the prime of my youth and beauty. I had ridden out to hunt My Lord the Tiger with a hundred courtiers and a thousand men at arms. The hunt was a success. Upon that wall beside you the artist has painted Lodivarman slaying the great beast. Never shall I forget the day of our triumphal return to Lodidhapura. Ah, Siva, no, never shall I forget! It was a day of triumph, a day of discovery—and the day of my cruel undoing by the foul creature whose sin you are to expiate.

"It was upon that day that I first tasted a mushroom. At a little village in the jungle a native upon bended knee offered me a platter of this then strange food. I partook. Never in my life had I tasted a viand more delicious. Dismounting, I sat beneath a tree before the hut of the poor peasant and there I ate all of the mushrooms that he had prepared—a great platter of them—but then, nor ever since, have I seemed to be able to satisfy my craving for them. I questioned him as to what they were and how they grew and I gave orders that he be brought to Lodidhapura and given the means to propagate the royal food. He still lives. He has been showered with honors and riches, and still he raises mushrooms for Lodivarman; nor may any other in the realm raise them, nor any but the king partake of them. And thus there occurred a great happiness and a great satisfaction upon the selfsame day that saw all else snatched from me."

"Lie still," said King. "Do not force me to kill you!".... Fou-tan wrenched the curtain-cords loose and with them he bound the Khmer king.



"As we entered Lodidhapura later in the day crowds lined the avenue to see their king. They sang and shouted in welcome and threw blossoms at us. My charger, frightened by the noise and the bombardment of blossoms, became unmanageable and I was hurled heavily to the ground, whereat a woman of the crowd rushed forward and threw herself upon me and with her arms about me she covered my face and mouth with kisses. When my courtiers reached my side and dragged her from me and lifted me to my feet, it was seen that the woman was diseased, and a great cry of horror arose; the people who had come to applaud me shrank away; even my courtiers drew to one side. Alone I mounted my horse, and alone I rode into the city of Lodidhapura.

"Within an hour I was stricken; these hideous sores came upon my body as by magic, nor ever since have I been free from them. And now you shall have them, woman—daughter of a woman! As I have rotted, so shall you rot; as I am loathed, so shall you be loathed; as my youth and beauty were blasted, so shall yours be. Come!" And he laid a heavy hand upon the arm of Fou-tan.

Gordon King, entering the dimly lighted corridor, paused a moment to listen, to note if he might not hear voices that would guide him to those he sought; and as he stood there thus he saw a door open farther along the corridor and a man back out whom he instantly recognized as the major-domo. King looked for a place to hide, but there was no hiding-place; the corridor was straight and none too wide, and it was inevitable that he would be discovered if the major-domo came this way, as he did immediately he had closed the door of the apartment he had just quitted.

King grasped at the only chance that occurred to him for disarming the suspicions of the major-domo. Snapping to rigid attention, he stood as though a posted sentry just inside the entrance to the corridor. The major-domo saw him and a puzzled frown crossed the man's face as he approached along the corridor, halting when he came opposite King.

"What do you here, man?" he demanded.

"By the command of Lodivarman the king, I have been posted here with orders to let no one enter."

The major-domo seemed puzzled and rather at a loss as to what action he should take in the matter. He thought of returning to Lodivarman for verification of the warrior's statement, but he knew the short temper of his king and hesitated to incur his wrath in the event the warrior had spoken the truth. "The king said naught to me of this," he said. "He commanded me to see that no one entered this wing of the palace."

"That is what I am here for," replied King; "and, furthermore, I must tell you that nothing was said to me about you; therefore, I must order you to leave at once."

"But I am the major-domo," said the man haughtily.

"But I am the king's sentry," replied the American, "and if you wish to question the king's orders, let us go to Lodivarman together."

"Perhaps he forgot that he had ordered a sentry posted here," temporized the major-domo; "but how else could you have been posted here other than by orders from an officer of the king?"

"How else indeed?" inquired the American.

"Very well," snapped the major-domo. "See that you let no one enter!"—and he was about to pass on when King detained him.

"I have never been posted here before," he said; "perhaps you had better tell me if there is any other doorway in the corridor through which anyone might enter this section of the palace—that I may watch that also; and also if there is anyone here beside the king."

"Only the king and an apsaras are here," replied the man. "They are in that room from which you saw me come. The doorway at this side upon the right leads down a flight of steps to a corridor ending at a door which leads into the royal garden at this end of the palace. It is never used except by Lodivarman, and as the door is heavily barred upon the inside and a sentry posted upon the outside, there is no likelihood that anyone will enter there, so that there remains only this doorway to be guarded."

"My zeal shall merit the attention of the king," said the sentry, as the major-domo passed into the banquet hall.

"I do not know you," snapped the warrior. "I never heard of you or your slave girl!"



The moment that the man was out of sight King hastened quickly up the corridor and paused before the door behind which the major-domo told him he had left Lodivarman and Fou-tan. As he paused he heard a woman's voice raised in a cry of terror; it came from beyond the heavy panels of the door, and was scarcely voiced ere Gordon King pushed the portal aside and stepped into the room.

Before him Fou-tan was struggling to release herself from the clutches of Lodivarman. Horror and revulsion were written large upon her countenance, while rage and lust distorted the hideous face of the king.

At sight of the warrior Lodivarman's face went livid with a rage even greater than that which had been dominating him.

"How dare you?" he screamed. "You shall die for this! Who sent you hither?"

Gordon King closed the door behind him and advanced toward Lodivarman.

"Gordon King!" cried the girl, her astonishment reflected in her tone and in the expression upon her face. For an instant hope sprang to her eyes, but quickly it faded to be replaced by the fear that she felt for him now as well as for herself. "Oh, Gordon King, they will kill you for this!"

And now Lodivarman recognized him too. "So you are the warrior who slew the tiger single-handed!" he cried. "What brought you here?"

"I have come for Fou-tan," said King simply.

Lodivarman's face twitched with rage. He was rendered speechless by the effrontery of this low knave. Twice he tried to speak, but his anger choked him and then he sprang for a cord that hung pendent against one of the walls. But King guessed his purpose and forestalled him; springing forward, he grasped Lodivarman roughly by the shoulder and hurled him back.

"Not a sound out of you," he said, "or Loidhapura will be needing a new king."

It was then that Lodivarman found his voice. "You shall be boiled in oil for this," he said in a low voice.

"Then I might as well kill you," said Gordon King, "for if I have to die it is well that I have my vengeance first," —and he raised his spear as though to cast it.

"No, no!" exclaimed Lodivarman. "Do not kill me. I grant you pardon for your great offense."

King could not but marvel at the workings of the great law of self-preservation that caused this diseased creature, burdened by misery, hatred and unhappiness, so tenaciously to cling to the hope of life.

"Come, come!" cried Lodivarman. "Tell me what you want and be gone."

"I told you what I wanted," said King. "I came for Fou-tan."

"You cannot have her," cried Lodivarman. "She is mine. Think you that a woman would leave a king for you, knave?"

"Ask her," said King; but there was no need to ask her. Fou-tan crossed quickly to the American's side.

"Oh, Lodivarman," she cried, "let me go away in peace with this warrior!"

"It is that or death, Lodivarman," said King.

"That or death," repeated Lodivarman in a half-whisper. "Very well, then, you have won," he added presently. "Go in peace, and take the girl with you." But even if he had not noted the cunning expression in the king's eyes, Gordon King would not have been deceived by this sudden acquiescence to his demand.

"You are wise, Lodivarman," he said, "—wise to choose the easiest solution of your problem. I too must be guided by wisdom and by my knowledge of the ways of tyrants. Lie down upon the floor."

"Why?" demanded Lodivarman. "What would you do to me? Do you forget that I am a king—that my person is holy?"

"I remember that you are a man and that men may die, if living they present an obstacle to another man who is desperate. Lodivarman, you must know that I am desperate."

"I have told you that you might go in peace," said the monarch. "Why would you humiliate me?"

"I have no desire to humiliate you, Lodivarman. I only wish to assure myself that you shall not be able to give the alarm before Fou-tan and I are beyond the walls of Lodidhapura. I would secure you so that you cannot leave this chamber, and as you have given orders that no one is to enter this part of the king's house until you summon, it will be morning, at least, before you can dispatch warriors in pursuit of us."

For a moment Lodivarman stood silent as though in thought; then suddenly and quite unexpectedly he leaped straight for King, striking up the warrior's spear and endeavoring to clutch him by the throat. Whatever his faults, Lodivarman was no coward.

SO impetuous was the monarch's charge that King was borne backward beneath the man's weight. His heel caught in the fold of a tiger-skin upon the floor and he fell heavily backward with Lodivarman upon him.

The fingers of the king were already at his throat. But only for an instant did the Khmer king have an advantage. As he raised his voice to summon help the hand of the American found his throat, choking out the sound even as it was uttered. Youth and strength and endurance all were upon the side of the younger man. Slowly he wormed his body from beneath that of the king and then, kicking one of Lodivarman's braced feet from beneath him, he rolled the Khmer over upon his back and was upon him. Lodivarman's grip was wrenched from King's throat and now the Khmer was grasping for breath as he fought, violently but futilely, to disengage himself from the clutches of the man upon him.

"Lie still," said King. "Do not force me to kill you." The face of the king was directly beneath his eyes and even in this tense moment what the doctor's instinct in King saw induced a keen regret that he could not investigate this strange case more fully.

At King's last command and threat, Lodivarman had ceased his struggles and the American had relaxed his grasp upon the other's throat. "Are there any cords attached to the hangings in the room, Fou-tan?" he demanded of the girl.

"Yes, there are cords at the windows," replied she.

"Get them for me," said the American.

Quickly Fou-tan wrenched the cords loose from their fastenings and brought them to King, and with them the man bound the wrists and ankles of the Khmer king. So securely did he bind them and so tightly did he tie the knot that he had no fear Lodivarman could release himself without assistance, and now to make assurance that he could not summon help doubly sure, King stuffed a gag of soft cloth into the mouth of his royal prisoner and bound it tightly there with another cord. Then he sprang to his feet.

"Come, Fou-tan," he said, "we have no time to lose; but wait, you cannot go abroad in that garb. You are to accompany me as a slave girl, not as an apsaras."

Fou-tan snatched off her ornate headdress and threw it upon the floor; then she loosened the golden girdle that held her voluminous skirt in place, and as it dropped to the floor King saw that she wore a silken sampot beneath it. Across a taboret was a long drape, the ends of which were spread upon the floor. This Fou-tan took and wound about her lithe form as a sarong.

"I am ready, Gordon King," she said.

"The ear-rings," he suggested, "the necklace and your wrist ornaments. They look too royal for a slave."

"You are right," she said, as she removed them.

King quickly extinguished the cressets, leaving the room in darkness. Then together the two groped their way to the door. Opening it a little, King looked out. The cor-

ridor was empty. He drew Fou-tan into it and closed the door behind him. To the next door in the corridor he stepped and tried it; it was not locked. He could just see the top of a flight of stone steps leading down into utter darkness. He wished that he had brought one of the cressets, but now it was too late. He drew Fou-tan within and closed the door, and now they could see nothing.

"Where does this lead?" asked Fou-tan in a whisper.

"It is the king's private passage to the garden," replied the American, "and if I have made no mistake in my calculations the other end of it is guarded by a sentry who will pass us with a wink."

As they groped their way slowly down the steps and along the corridor, King explained to Fou-tan the subterfuge that he had adopted to obtain a place upon the guard that night—that he had particularly noticed the little door at the end of this wing of the palace, and that when the major-domo had told him of the private passage leading to the garden he had guessed that it ended at this very door. "The sentry there," he concluded, "is from my own barracks and he knows the story. That is why you must be a little slave girl tonight, Fou-tan."

"I do not mind being a slave girl—now," she said, and as she said it King felt the fingers of the hand he held in his press his own more tightly.

They came at last to the end of the corridor. In the darkness King's fingers ran over the surface of the door in search of bars and bolts. The fastening, which he found at last, was massive but simple. It moved beneath the pressure of his hand with only a slight grating sound. He pushed the door slowly open; the fresh night air blew in upon them; the starlit heavens bathed the garden in gentle luminosity. Cautiously King crossed the threshold. He saw the warrior upon his post without and instantly the man saw him.

"Who comes?" demanded the sentry, dropping his spear-point on a level with King's breast as he wheeled quickly toward him.

"It is I—King—of Vama's ten. I have found the slave girl of whom I told you and I would walk in the garden with her for a few moments."

"I do not know you," snapped the warrior. "I never heard of you or your slave girl!" Then it was that King realized that he had never seen this man before—that the sentries had been changed since he had entered the palace. His heart sank within him; yet he maintained a bold front.

"It will do no harm to let us pass for a while," he said; "you can see that I am a member of the guard, as otherwise I could not have gained access to the king's house."

"That may be true," replied the warrior, "but I have my orders and they are that no one shall pass either in or out of this doorway without proper authority. I will summon an officer. If he wishes to let you pass, you may do so."

FOU-TAN had been standing silent at King's side. Now she moved languorously toward the sentry. Every undulating motion of her lithe body was provocative. She came very close to him and turned her beautiful face up toward his. Her eyes were dreamy wells of promise. "For me?" she asked in a soft, caressing voice. "For me, warrior, could you not be blind for a moment?"

"For you, yes," said the man huskily, "but you are not for me; you belong to him."

"I have a sister," suggested Fou-tan. "When I return within the king's house perhaps she will come to this little door. What do you say, warrior?"

"Perhaps it can do no harm," he said hesitatingly. "How long will you remain in the garden?"

"We shall be in the garden only a few minutes," said King—which was indeed his intention.

"I shall turn my back," said the sentry. "I have not seen you. Remember that, I have not seen you."

"Nor have we seen you," replied King.

"Do not forget your sister, little one," said the sentry, as he turned away from them and continued along his post, while Gordon King and Fou-tan merged with the shadows of the trees beyond.

Perhaps, hours later, when he was relieved, the sentry realized that he had been duped, but there were excellent reasons why he should keep a still tongue in his head, though he intended at the first opportunity to look up this warrior who said that his name was King and demand an accounting from him. Perhaps, after all, the slave girl had had no sister—with which thought he turned on his pallet of straw and fell asleep.

CHAPTER X THE FLIGHT

TRUE to their promise to the sentry, Fou-tan and King did not remain long within the garden of Lodivarman. Inasmuch as the walls had been built to keep people out of the royal enclosure, rather than to keep them in, it was not difficult to find a spot where the walls might be scaled, since in many places trees grew near it, their branches overhanging.

Along the unlighted streets of the city proper the sight of a warrior and a girl was not so uncommon as to attract attention and so it was with comparative ease that they made their way to the city's outer wall. Here, once more, a like condition prevailed. Low sheds and buildings abutted against the inner surface of the city's ramparts and presently King found a place where he could ascend to the roof of a building and surmount the wall itself. The drop to the ground upon the outside, however, was considerable and here they were confronted with the greatest danger that had menaced them since they had passed the sentry. For either one of them to suffer a sprained ankle or a broken leg at this time would have been fatal to both.

In the darkness King could not determine the nature of the ground at the foot of the wall; the light of the stars was not sufficient for that.

"We shall have to take a chance here, Fou-tan," he said.

"It is high, Gordon King," she said, "but if you tell me to I will jump."

"No," he said, "that is not necessary. I judge that the wall is about twenty feet high here. My spear is six feet long; your sarong must be at least eight feet, possibly longer."

"Yes, it is much too long," she said. "It was not intended for a sarong, but what has that to do with it?"

"I am going to tie one end of the sarong to the end of my spear; I shall tie a knot in the other end of the sarong. Do you think that you are strong enough to cling to that knot while I lower you as near the ground as I can?"

"I am very strong," said Fou-tan, "and desperation lends even greater strength." As she spoke she commenced to remove her sarong and a moment later King was lowering her slowly over the edge of the wall.

"When I have lowered you as far as I can," he whispered in her ear, "I shall tell you to drop. After you have done so, stand quickly to one side and I will drop my spear. Then you must take it away so that I will not drop upon it, and also if the ground is rough smooth it a little for me."

"Yes," she agreed, and King lowered her away down the outside of the wall of Lodidhapura.

Presently he was clinging only to the end of the spear and was leaning far over the edge of the wall. "Drop," he said in a low voice. Instantly the pull of her weight

was gone from the spear-handle in his hand. "Are you all right?" he asked in a low voice.

"Yes," she replied. "Drop the spear,"—and then an instant later: "The grass is thick and soft here."

King lowered himself over the edge of the wall and hung an instant by his fingers. Then he released his hold and dropped. As he rolled over in the tall grass, considerably jarred but unhurt, Fou-tan was at his side. "You are all right, Gordon King?" she demanded. "You are not hurt?"

"I am all right," he said.

"I shall sacrifice a bullock in the temple of Siva when we reach Pnom Dhek," she said.

"For your sake, Fou-tan, I hope that it will not be long before you are able to sacrifice the bullock, but we are not at Pnom Dhek yet; I do not even know where it is."

"I do," replied the girl.

"In what direction?" he asked.

She pointed. "There," she said, "but the way is long and difficult."

Near them was a group of native huts, clustered close to the foot of the wall, and so they moved out straight across the clearing to the edge of the jungle and then, turning, paralleled the jungle until they had passed the city.

"When we were brought into Lodidhapura I saw an avenue leading into the jungle somewhere in this direction," said King.

"Yes," replied Fou-tan, "but that does not lead to Pnom Dhek."

"Which is the reason that I wish to find it," said King. "The pursuit will be directed straight in the direction of Pnom Dhek, you may be assured. Men upon elephants and upon horses will travel after us much more rapidly than we can travel and we shall be overtaken if we take the road toward Pnom Dhek. We must go in some other direction and hide in the jungle for days, perhaps, before we may dare to approach Pnom Dhek."

"I do not care," she said, "and I shall not be afraid if you are with me, Gordon King."

It was not long before they found the road that he sought. In the open starlit night the transition to the jungle was depressing and, too, as they both realized, it was highly dangerous; all about them were the noises of the gloomy nocturnal forest; the mysterious rustling of underbrush as some beast passed on padded feet; a coughing growl in the distance, a snarl and a scream, and then perhaps a long silence that was more terrifying than the noise.

A FEW months ago King would have considered their position far more precarious than he did this night, but long familiarity with the jungle had inured him to its dangers, with the result that he had unwittingly acquired that tendency to fatalism so noticeable a characteristic of primitive people who live constantly beneath the menace of beasts of prey. He was, however, no less aware of the dangers that confronted them, but held them the lesser of two evils. To remain in the neighborhood of Lodidhapura would most certainly result in their early capture and subject them to a fate as merciless and more cruel than any which might waylay them along the dark aisles of the forest. Propinquity had considerably altered his estimation of the great cats; whereas formerly he had thought of them as the fearless exterminators of mankind, he had since learned that not all of them were man-killers and that more often did they avoid man than pursue him. The chances then that they might come through the night without attack were greatly in their favor, but should they meet a tiger or a leopard or a panther who, because of hunger, old age or viciousness, should elect to attack them, their doom might well be sealed, and whether they were

moving away from Lodidhapura upon the ground or hiding in a tree, they would be almost equally at the mercy of one or another of these fierce carnivores.

The avenue that they were following, which entered the jungle from Lodidhapura, ran wide and clear for a considerable distance into the forest, dwindling at last to little more than an ordinary game trail. To elude their pursuers they must leave it; but that they might not attempt until daylight, since to strike out blindly into the trackless jungle, buried in the impenetrable gloom of night, must almost assuredly have spelled disaster.

"Even if they find Lodivarman before morning," he said, "I doubt that they will commence their search for us before daylight."

"They will be ordered out in pursuit the instant that Lodivarman can issue a command," replied Fou-tan; "but there is little likelihood that anyone will dare to risk his anger by approaching the apartment in which he lies until his long silence has aroused suspicion. If your bonds hold and

he is unable to remove the gag from his mouth, I doubt very much that he will be discovered before noon. His people fear his anger, which is quick and merciless, and there is only one man in all Lodidhapura who would risk incurring it by entering that apartment before Lodivarman summoned him."

"And who is that?" asked King.

"Vay Thon, the high priest of Siva," replied the girl.

"If I am missed and the word reaches the ears of Vay Thon," said King, "it is likely that his suspicion may be aroused."

"Why?" asked Fou-tan.

"Because I talked with him this afternoon and I could see that he guessed what was in my heart. It was he who told me that Lodivarman would send for you tonight. It was Vay Thon who warned me to attempt no rash deed."

"He does not love Lodivarman," said the girl, "and it may be that if he guessed the truth he might be silent, for he has been kind to me and I know that he liked you."

For hour after hour the two groped their way along the dark trail, aided now by the dim light of the moon that the canopy of foliage above blocked and diffused until that



King hung an instant by his fingers. Then he released his hold.

which reached the jungle floor could not be called light at all, but rather a lesser degree of darkness.

With the passing of the hours King realized that Fou-tan's steps were commencing to lag. He timed his own then to suit hers and, walking close beside her, supported her with his arm. She seemed so small and delicate and unsuited to an ordeal like this that the man marveled at her stamina. More

of a hot-house plant than a girl of flesh and blood seemed Fou-tan of Pnom Dhek, and yet she was evincing the courage and endurance of a man. He recalled that not once during the night had she voiced any fear of the jungle, not even when great beasts had passed so close to them that they almost could hear their breathing.

If Khmer slaves were of this stock, to what noble heights of courage must the masters achieve!

"You are very tired, Fou-tan," he said; "we shall rest presently."

"No," she replied. "Do not rest on my account. If you would not rest upon your own account, then it must be that you do not think it wise to do so and because I am with you should make no difference in your actions. When you feel the need of rest and believe that it is safe to rest, then I may rest also, but not until."

Stealthily the dawn, advance guard of the laggard day, crept slowly through the jungle, pushing back the impenetrable shadows of the night. Shadowy trees emerged from the darkness; armies of gaunt gray boles marched in endless procession slowly by them; the trail that had been but a blank wall of darkness before projected itself forward to the next turn; the hideous night lay behind them, and a new hope was born within their bosoms. It was time now to leave the trail and search for a hiding-place and conditions were particularly favorable at this spot, since the underbrush was comparatively scant.

Turning abruptly to the left, King struck off at right angles to the trail and for another hour the two pushed onward into the untracked mazes of the forest.

This last hour was particularly difficult, for there was no trail and the ground rose rapidly, suggesting to King that

they were approaching mountains. There were numerous outcroppings of rock and at length they came to the edge of a gorge, in the bottom of which ran a stream of pure water.

"The gods have been good to us," exclaimed King.

"I have been praying to them all night," said Fou-tan.

The little stream had cut deeply into its limestone bed, but at last they found a way down to the water, where the cool and refreshing liquid gave them renewed strength and hope.

The evidences of erosion in the limestone about them suggested to King that a little search might reveal a safe and adequate hiding-place. Fortunately the water in the stream was low, giving them dry footing along its side as they followed the gorge upward; nor had they gone far before they discovered a location that was ideal for their purpose. Here the stream made a sharp bend that was almost a right angle, and where the waters had rushed for countless ages against the base of a limestone cliff they had eaten their way far into it, hollowing out a sanctuary where the two fugitives would be safe from observation from above.

Leaving Fou-tan in the little grotto, King crossed the stream and gathered an armful of dry grasses that grew above the high water-line upon the opposite side, and after several trips he was able to make a reasonably comfortable bed for each of them.

"Sleep now," he said to Fou-tan, "and when you are rested, I shall sleep."

The girl would have demurred, wishing him to sleep first, but even as she voiced her protest, exhaustion overcame her and she sank into profound slumber. Seated with his back against the limestone wall of their retreat, King sought desperately to keep awake, but the monotonous sound of the running water, which drowned all other sounds, acted as a soporific, which, combined with outraged Nature's craving for rest, made the battle he was waging a difficult one. Twice he dozed, then, disgusted with himself, he arose and paced to and fro the length of their sanctuary, but the instant that he sat down again he fell asleep.

It was mid-afternoon when King awoke with a start. He had been the victim of a harrowing dream and so real had it been that even as he awoke he grasped his spear and leaped to his feet, but there was no danger menacing. He listened intently, but the only sound came from the waters of the stream.

Fou-tan opened her eyes and looked at him. "What is it?" she asked.

He grimaced in self-disgust. "I slept at my post," he said. "I have been asleep a long time and I have just awakened."

"I am glad," she said with a smile. "I hope that you have slept for a long time."

"I have slept almost as long as you have, Fou-tan," he replied; "but suppose that the searchers had come while I slept."

"They did not come, however," she reminded him.

"Well, right or wrong, we have both slept now," he said, "and my next business is to obtain food."

"There is plenty in the forest," she said.

"Yes, I noted it as we came this way in the morning," King replied.

"Will it be safe to go out and search for food?"

"We shall have to take the chance," he replied. "We must eat and we cannot find food at night. We shall have to go together, Fou-tan, as I cannot risk leaving you alone for a moment."

As King and Fou-tan left their hiding-place and started down the gorge toward a place where they could clamber out of it into the forest in search of food, a creature at the summit of the cliff upon the opposite side of the stream crouched behind a low bush and watched them. Out of small eyes, deep-set beneath a mass of tangled hair, the creature watched every movement of the two and when they had passed it followed them stealthily, stalking them as a tiger might have stalked. But this was no tiger; it was a man—a huge, hulking brute of a man, standing well over six feet six on its great flat feet. Its only apparel was a gee-string, made from the skin of a wild animal. It wore no ornaments, but it carried weapons—a short spear, a bow and arrows.

The jungle lore that the American had learned under the tutelage of Che stood him in good stead now, for it permitted him quickly to locate edible fruit and tubers without waste of time and with a minimum of effort.

Fou-tan, city-bred, had but a hazy and most impractical knowledge of the flora of the jungle. She knew the tall, straight teak standing leafless now in the dry season; the India-rubber tree; and with almost childish delight she recognized the leathery laurel-like leaves of the tree from whose gum resin gamboge is secured; the tall, flowering stems of the cardamom she knew too—but the sum total of her knowledge would not have given sustenance to a canary in the jungle. Therefore King's efficiency in this matter filled her with awe and admiration. Her dark eyes followed his every move, and when he had collected all of the food that they could conveniently carry and they had turned their steps back toward their hiding-place Fou-tan was bubbling over with pride and confidence and happiness. Perhaps it was well that she did not see the uncouth figure hiding in the underbrush as they passed.

Back in their retreat they partially satisfied their hunger with such of the food as did not require cooking. "Tonight we can have a fire," said King, "and roast some of these tubers. It would not be safe now, for the smoke might be seen for a considerable distance, but at night they will not be searching for us and the light of a small fire will never escape from this gorge."

After they had eaten King took his spear and walked down to the stream where he had seen fish jumping. He was prompted more by a desire to pass away the time than by any hope of success in this piscatorial adventure, but so numerous were the fish and so unafraid that he succeeded in spearing two with the utmost ease while Fou-tan stood at his elbow applauding him with excited little exclamations and squeals of delight.

King had never been any less sensitive to the approbation of the opposite sex than any other normal man, but never, he realized, had praise sounded more sweetly in his ears than now. There was something so altogether sincere in Fou-tan's praise that it did not even remotely suggest adulation. He had always found her such a forthright little person that he could not now doubt her sincerity.

"Now we shall have a feast," she exclaimed, as they





King's spear-arm went back; there was naught he could do but try!

carried the fishes back into their grotto. "It is a good thing for me that you are here, Gordon King, and not another."

"Why, Fou-tan?" he asked.

"Imagine Bharata Rahon or any of the others being faced with the necessity of finding food for me here in the jungle," she exclaimed. "Why, I should either have starved to death or have been poisoned by their ignorance and stupidity! No, there is no one like Gordon King, as Fou-tan his slave should know."

"Do not call yourself that," he said. "You are not my slave."

"Let us play that I am," she said. "I like it. A slave is great in the greatness of his master; therefore, it can be no disgrace to be the slave of Gordon King."

"If I had not found you here in the jungles of Cambodia," he said, "I could have sworn that you are Irish."

"Irish?" she asked. "What is Irish?"

"The Irish are a people who live upon a little island, far, far away. They have a famous stone there and when one has kissed this stone he cannot help thereafter but speak in terms of extravagant praise of all whom he meets. It is said that all of the Irish have kissed this stone."

"I do not have to kiss a stone to tell the truth to you, Gordon King," she said. "I do not always say nice things to people, but I like to say them to you."

"Why?" he asked.

"I do not know, Gordon King," said Fou-tan, and her eyes dropped from his level gaze.

They were sitting upon the dry grasses that he had gathered for their beds. King sat now in silence, looking at the girl. For the thousandth time he was impressed by her great beauty; then the face of another girl arose in a vision between them. It was the face of Susan Anne Prentice. With a short laugh King turned his gaze down toward the stream, while once again, upon the opposite cliff-top, the little eyes of the uncouth man watched them.

"Why do you laugh, Gordon King?" asked Fou-tan, looking up suddenly.

"You would not understand, Fou-tan," he said. He had been thinking of what Susan Anne would say could she

have knowledge of the situation in which he then was—a situation which he realized was not only improbable but impossible. Here was he, Gordon King, a graduate physician, a perfectly normal product of the Twentieth Century, sitting almost naked under a big rock with a little slave girl of a race that had disappeared hundreds of years before. That, in itself, was preposterous. But there was another matter that was even less credible—he realized that he enjoyed the situation and most of all he enjoyed the company of the little slave girl.

"You are laughing at me, Gordon King," said Fou-tan, "and I do not like to be laughed at."

"I was not laughing at you, Fou-tan," he replied. "I could not laugh at you. I—"

"You what?" she demanded.

"I could not laugh at you," he repeated lamely.

"You said that once before, Gordon King," she reminded him. "You started to say something else. What was it?"

For a moment he was silent. "I have forgotten, Fou-tan," he said then.

His eyes were turned away from her as she looked at him keenly in silence for some time. Then a slow smile lighted her face and she broke into a little humming song.

The man upon the opposite cliff withdrew stealthily until he was out of sight of the two in the gorge below him. Then he arose to an erect position and crept softly away into the forest. Ready in his hands were his bow and an arrow. For all his great size and weight he moved without noise, his little eyes shifting constantly from side to side. Suddenly and so quickly that one could scarce follow the movements of his hands, an arrow sped from his bow and an instant later he stepped forward and picked up a large rat that had been transfixed by his missile. The creature moved slowly onward and presently a little monkey swung through the trees above him. Again the bowstring twanged and the little monkey hurtled to the ground at the feet of the primitive hunter.

Squatting on his haunches, the man-thing ate the rat raw; then he carried the monkey back to the edge of the gorge and after satisfying himself that the two were still

there, he fell to upon the principal item of his dinner, and he was still eating when darkness came. . . .

Fou-tan had not broken King's embarrassed silence, but presently the man arose. "Where are you going, Gordon King?" she asked.

"There is some driftwood lodged upon the opposite bank, left there by last season's floodwaters. We shall need it for our cooking-fire tonight."

"I will come with you and help you," said Fou-tan, and together they crossed the little stream and gathered the dry wood for their fire.

From Che and Kangrey the American had learned to make fire without matches and he soon had a little blaze burning, far back beneath the shelter of their overhanging rock. He had cleaned and washed the fish and now he proceeded to grill them over the fire, while Fou-tan roasted two large tubers impaled upon the ends of sticks.

"I would not exchange this for the palace of a king, Gordon King," she said.

"Nor I, Fou-tan," he replied.

"Are you happy, Gordon King?" she asked.

"Yes," he replied. "And you, Fou-tan, are you happy?" She nodded her head. "It is because you and I are together," she said simply.

"We come from opposite ends of the earth, Fou-tan," he said; "we are separated by centuries of time, we have nothing in common; your world and my world are as remote from one another as the stars and yet, Fou-tan, it seems as though I had known you always. It does not seem possible that I have lived all my life up to now without even knowing that you existed."

"I have felt that too, Gordon King," said the girl. "I cannot understand it, but it is so. However, you are wrong in one respect."

"And what is that?" he asked.

"You said we had nothing in common. We have."

"What is it?" demanded King.

Fou-tan shuddered. "The leprosy," she said. "He touched us both. We shall both have it."

Gordon King laughed. "We will never contract leprosy from Lodivarman," he stated. "I am a doctor. I know."

"Why will we not?" she demanded.

"Because Lodivarman is not a leper," replied King.

CHAPTER XI

LOVE AND THE BRUTE

FROM the opposite side of the gorge the brute, gnawing upon a leg-bone of the monkey, watched the two below. He saw the fire kindled and it troubled him. He was afraid of fire. Muddily, in his half-formed brain, it represented the personification of some malign power. The brute knew no god, but he knew that there were forces that brought pain, disaster, death and that oftentimes these forces were invisible. The visible causes of such effects were the enemies he had met in the jungle in the form of men or of beasts; therefore, it was natural that he should endow the invisible causes of similar effects with the physical attributes of the enemies that he could see. He peopled the jungle, accordingly, with invisible men and invisible beasts that wrought pain, disaster and death. These enemies he held in far greater fear than those that were visible to him. Fire, he knew, was the work of one of these dread creatures.

The brute was not hungry; he harbored no animosity for the two creatures he stalked; he was motivated by a more powerful urge than hunger or hate. He had seen the girl!

The fire annoyed him and it kept him at bay; but time meant little to the brute. He saw that the two had made beds and he guessed that they would sleep where they were during the night. On the morrow they would go out after food and there would be no fire with them. The brute was content to wait until the morrow. He found some tall grass and getting upon his hands and knees turned about several times, as bedding dogs are wont to do, and then lay down—he had flattened the grasses so that they all lay in one direction and when he turned upon his bed he always turned in that direction, so that the sharp ends of the grasses did not stick into his flesh. Perhaps he had learned this trick from the wild dogs, or perhaps the wild dogs first learned it from man. Who knows?

In the darkness Fou-tan and King sat upon their beds and talked. Fou-tan was full of questions. She wanted to know all about the strange country from which King came. Most of the things he told her she could not understand; but her questions were quite often directed upon subjects that were well within her ken—there are some matters that are eternal; time does not alter them.

"Are the women of your country beautiful?" she asked.

"Some of them," replied the man.

"Have you a wife, Gordon King?" The question was voiced in a whisper.

"No, Fou-tan."

"But you love some one," she insisted.

"I have been too busy to fall in love," he replied good-naturedly.

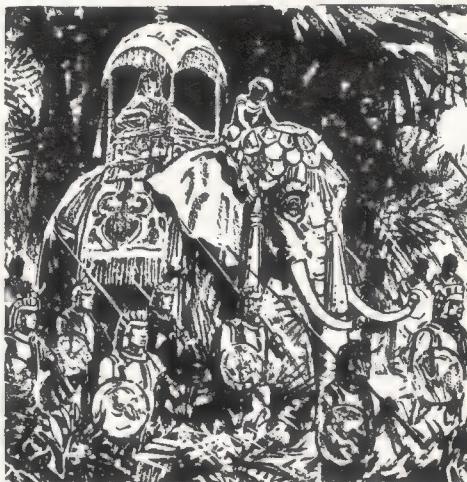
"You are not very busy now," suggested Fou-tan.

"I think I shall be a very busy man for the next few days trying to get you back to Pnom Dhek," he assured her.

Fou-tan was silent. It was dark and he could scarcely see her. But he could feel her presence near him and it seemed to exert as strong an influence upon him as might have physical contact. He had recognized the power of that indefinable thing called personality when he had talked with people and looked into their eyes; but he never had had it reach out through the dark and lay hold of him as though with warm fingers of flesh and blood, and he found the sensation most disquieting.

They lay in silence upon their beds of dry grasses, each occupied with his own thoughts. The heat of the jungle day was rising slowly from the narrow gorge and a damp chill was replacing it. The absolute darkness which surrounded them was slightly mitigated in their immediate vicinity by an occasional flame rising from the embers of their dying fire as drying

twigs of their fuel ignited. King was thinking of the girl at his side, of the responsibility her presence entailed and the duty he owed to her and to himself. He tried not to think about her, but that he found impossible, and the more she was in his mind the stronger became the realization of the hold that she had obtained upon him; but that the sensation which she animated within him was love seemed incredibly preposterous. He tried to assure himself that it was but an infatuation engendered by her beauty and propinquity and he girded himself to conquer his infatuation that he might perform the duty devolving upon him.



In order to fortify this noble decision he cast Fou-tan from his mind entirely and occupied himself with thoughts of his friends in far-away America; in retrospect he once more laughed and danced again with Susan Anne Prentice. He listened to her pleasant cultured voice and enjoyed again the sweet companionship of the girl who was to him all that a beloved sister might have been. Then a little sigh came from the bed of grasses at his side and the vision of Susan Anne Prentice faded into oblivion.

Again there was a long silence, broken only by the murmur of the tumbling stream.

"Gordon King!" It was just a whisper.

"What is it, Fou-tan?"

"I am afraid, Gordon King," said the girl. How like a child in the dark she sounded! Before he could answer there came the sound of a soft thud down the gorge and the rattle of loose earth falling from above.

"What was that?" asked Fou-tan in a frightened whisper. "Something is coming, Gordon King. Look!"

Silently the man rose to his feet, grasping his spear in readiness. Down the gorge he saw two blazing points of flame and quickly stepping to their fire he placed dry twigs upon the embers, blowing upon them gently until they burst into flame. At a little distance those two glowing spots burned out of the darkness.

King piled more wood upon the fire until it blazed up bravely, illuminating their little grotto and revealing Fou-tan sitting up upon her bed of grasses, gazing with wide horror-filled eyes at those two silent, ominous harbingers of death fixed so menacingly upon them. "My Lord the Tiger!" she whispered, and her low, tense tones were vibrant with all the inherent horror of the great beast that had been passed down to her by countless progenitors for whom the tiger had constituted life's greatest menace.

Primitive creatures, constantly surrounded by lethal dangers, sleep lightly. The descent of the great cat into the gorge, followed by the sounds of the falling earth and stones it had dislodged, brought the sleeping brute upon the opposite summit to his feet. Thinking that the noise might have come from the quarry in the gorge below, the creature moved quickly to the edge of the cliff and looked down, and as the mounting blazes of King's fire illuminated the scene the brute saw the great tiger standing with up-raised head, watching the man and the woman in their rocky retreat.

Here was an interloper that aroused the ire of the brute; here was a deadly enemy about to seize that which the brute had already marked as his own.

The creature selected a heavy arrow, the heaviest arrow that he carried, and fitting it to his bow he bent the sturdy weapon until the point of the arrow touched the fingers of his bow hand; then he let drive at a point just behind the shoulders of the tiger.

What happened thereafter happened very quickly. The arrow drove through to the great cat's lungs; the shock, the surprise and the pain brought instant reaction.

Not having sensed the presence of any other formidable



As King and Fou-tan started down the gorge, a creature upon the opposite side of the stream crouched and watched—then followed stealthily.

creature than those before him, My Lord the Tiger must naturally have assumed that they were the authors of his hurt. This supposition, at least, seemed likely if judged by that which immediately occurred.

With a hideous roar, with blazing eyes, with wide-dis tended jaws, revealing his gleaming fangs, the great cat charged straight for King. Into the circle of firelight it bounded—a hideous force of destruction.

Little Fou-tan, on her feet beside King, seized a blazing brand from the fire and hurled it full in the face of the charging beast, but the tiger was too far gone in pain and rage longer to harbor fear of aught.

King's spear-arm went back. Through his mind flashed the recollection of the other tiger that he had killed with a single spear-cast. He had known then that he had been for the instant the favored child of Fortune. The laws of chance would never countenance a repetition of that amazing stroke of luck; yet there was naught that he could do but try.

He held his nerves and muscles in absolute control, the servants of his iron will. Every faculty of mind and body was centered upon the accuracy and the power of his spear-arm.

Had he given thought to what might follow, his nerves must necessarily have faltered, but he did not. Cool and collected, he waited until he knew that he could not miss, nor could he wait another instant. Then the bronze skin of his spear-arm flashed in the light of the fire and at the same instant he swept Fou-tan to him with his left arm and leaped to one side. No one could have acted with greater celerity, calmness and judgment. A low grunt of surprise and admiration burst from the lips of the brute watching from the summit of the opposite cliff.

The charge of the tiger carried it full into the fire, scattering the burning branches in all directions. The dry grasses of the beds burst into flame. Blinded and terrified, the tiger looked about futilely for his prey, but King had leaped quickly across the stream to the opposite side of the gorge, having learned by experience that a creature near the fire can see nothing in the outer darkness.

Mystery Haunts the Storm

The able writing man who gave us "The Day of Disaster" was in fine form when he wrote this swift-moving drama.

By SEVEN ANDERTON

Illustrated by Paul Orban

IT was only a quarter past five, but sullen clouds had hastened the winter darkness; and the northwest wind, sweeping across the Dakota prairies, was drifting the six inches of snow that had fallen earlier in the day. With the bright beam of its lamps stabbing the swirling whiteness, a shiny green coupé shot out of the storm and stopped beside the red gasoline pump standing before Ben Halliday's little garage. A long blast from the horn demanded service.

As Halliday's big lean figure emerged from the door of the little office built off one corner of the garage, the driver of the coupé lowered a window. By the light that shone through the frost-crusted windows of the office, Halliday saw a piquant, oval face looking at him from the depths of a fur collar. It was the face of a girl in her early twenties—as pretty a face, it struck Ben Halliday, as he had ever seen.

"What town is this, please?" asked the girl in a voice that was clear but soft and deep, like the A string of a 'cello.

"Bartley, miss," answered Ben.

"How far is it to Milton City?"

"Fifty-two miles, miss," replied Ben; "but I wouldn't try to make it tonight if I were you."

"Why not?" inquired the girl. "Isn't the road good?"

"State road," Halliday told her. "Graveled all the way. But this storm may turn to a blizzard any minute. In a couple of hours there can be drifts across the road higher than your head."

Dimples appeared in the girl's cheeks, and her teeth flashed in a white smile. "In less than two hours I'll be in Milton City," she said. "I'm a good driver. This is a good car, and there's a heater in it. Please give me five gallons of gasoline and see if there is enough alcohol in the radiator."

The young garage owner found the radiator solution good and ran the requested amount of gasoline into the tank of the coupé. His face was serious as he stepped back to the lowered window.

"Honestly, miss," insisted Halliday, "you shouldn't tackle the drive to Milton City tonight. There is no other town between here and there. It is ten below zero right now, and going to get colder. You wouldn't enjoy being marooned for the night out there on the prairie."

"I could at least stop at a farmhouse," answered the girl, handing him the money for the gasoline.

"They are pretty far apart, and if a blizzard breaks, your chance of getting to one wouldn't be very good," persisted Ben. "You'd better stop here until morning. This is only a village, but it is better than the open country. I can get accommodations for you at Mrs. Brinkley's house across the street."

"Thank you," smiled the girl. "I guess I'm stubborn,

but I'm going through. I must be in Milton City early in the morning, if possible. If I get stuck, I have plenty of wraps and a tankful of gas. I can keep the car warm with the heater. Good-by."

The girl ran up the window and stepped on the starter. Ben Halliday shrugged his wide shoulders and turned back toward the office. The car shot away. Halfway to the door, Halliday paused and turned to watch the tail-light of the coupé disappear in the swirling, wind-driven snow.

"Darned little idiot," muttered Ben Halliday. "But gosh, she's a pretty one!"

Going back to the garage, Halliday banked the fires in the two coal stoves, one in the office and one in the rear of the shop. It was going to be a bitter night. He did the few other nightly chores about the shop and locked the big back and front doors. Then he went into the office and checked the day's receipts. Somehow, he couldn't get his mind off the exceedingly pretty girl who had so recklessly driven away into the teeth of the threatening storm.

"Hope she makes it," he muttered as he thrust the canvas sack of money into his pocket and rose to turn off the lights. "But she—"

The jangle of the telephone on the wall behind the rusty stove interrupted him. Ben strode to the instrument and answered.

"Hello," came a voice over the wire. "Is this the garage at Bartley?"

"Yes."

"Well," said the voice, "this is Eve Cartwright, the girl you tried to keep in Bartley. I hate to give you a chance to say I told you so, but my car has broken down. Can you come out and fix it—or tow me in?"

"Where are you?" asked Ben. He was glad the girl had called, and at the same time felt that he could enjoy shaking her. Supper was on the table across the street at Mrs. Brinkley's house—and Ben was hungry.

"I'm at a farmhouse," answered the girl. "I guess it's about six or seven miles from Bartley. The car is standing in the highway with the lights burning."

"Whose house are you in?"

"I don't know. There seems to be nobody at home. But the door wasn't locked, as I came in and found the telephone."

"What does the house look like?"

"Like a farmhouse," laughed the girl. "Please hurry out. You can look at it when you get here. You can't miss the car."

"All right," answered Ben, not too pleasantly. "I'll be right along."

Ben unlocked the front doors and ran out his trouble-truck. He had put the chains on all four wheels earlier in the afternoon. He slipped into a big coat of sheep-lined duck and pulled on a pair of yarn gloves. Then he hurried

across the street and told Mrs. Brinkley, the widow with whom he boarded, to keep supper hot for two. Five minutes after the girl had called, the trouble-truck headed into the storm with a scowling young garage man behind the wheel.

"Women," Ben Halliday told the wind which whistled about the rattling cab, "are a nuisance."

Ten minutes of hurling the truck along the gravel highway and through the small drifts which lay across it here and there brought Ben Halliday to where the green coupé stood with head- and tail-lights shining through the swirling snow. He pulled the truck up behind the coupé and climbed down. A glance showed him that the pert little driver was not in the car. He walked around the machine. There was no sign of the girl.

"Miss Cartwright!" he called. The wind tore the words from his lips and whisked them away into the night.

There was no answer. Ben peered through the darkness toward where the bulk of a farmhouse and its huddle of outbuildings loomed at a distance of perhaps a hundred yards from the road. He recognized it as a poultry farm known to the countryside as "Professor Lohman's place." There was no light showing anywhere about the buildings.

"She probably waited in the house to see me drive up," Halliday told himself.

He opened the door of the coupé and tried the motor. It started with a low, even purr. He climbed into the seat and grasped the controls. The car refused to move.

"Differential," growled Ben, sliding out of the coupé. "I guess Miss Eve Cartwright will stay all night in Bartley, whether she wants to or not."

He peered again toward the farmhouse. There was no sign of anybody coming across the snow-covered expanse between it and the road. Halliday pulled an electric torch from the pocket of the big coat and cast its circle of light on the snow. There were small tracks, evidently those of the girl, leading away. They were rapidly being erased by the drifting snow, but Ben was able to follow them along the drive and across the yard to the front door of the house.

He pounded on the door. Then he grasped the knob and pushed the door open. The room was dark, and the young garage man swept the beam from his torch around it. It was a rather comfortably furnished living-room. There were a number of easy chairs, a long, narrow table in the center of the room, and two well-filled bookcases against the walls.

"Miss Cartwright!" shouted Ben. "Hello!"

His lusty voice echoed through the house, but brought no answer. The still rising wind, howling about the house and driving the snow like fine particles of sand against the windowpanes, was the only sound. The beam of light found the telephone on the wall of a hall that led from the living-room to the back of the house. Ben noticed that the bare floor below the instrument was wet in numerous spots. Evidently melting snow from the feet or garments of the missing girl had dripped while she stood at the telephone.

It was not cold in the house. Ben strode to the nickel-trimmed heating-stove and looked in. The fire had been tended within two hours. There was still a bed of red coals. Ben began a swift search of the other rooms of the one-story house. Two bedrooms and a dining-room were empty. He stepped from the latter room and crossed the narrow hall into the kitchen. Sweeping his light about the room, Halliday uttered a cry of surprise—and stood with

the beam fixed on a body which lay sprawled on the linoleum-covered floor between the cook-stove and a table that stood against the opposite wall. It was quite apparent that the man was dead. A dark pool had spread on the linoleum beneath his head, which had been bashed in by a blow from some heavy weapon.

Halliday recognized the man as Professor Lohman, the owner of the place. Lohman had come to the community some three years before and bought the small farm. He said that he meant to raise fancy poultry, having been forced by ill health to retire from his position on the faculty of an Eastern col-



"You shouldn't tackle that drive tonight," said Ben. "I guess I'm stubborn," smiled the girl, "but I'm going through."

lege. Taking possession of the place, he had apparently carried out his plan. He had not mingled much in the community life, but had been accepted as a quiet neighbor who minded his own business. He was a tall man, very thin and without much color—looking the man of books and science. Throughout the countryside he was known as "the chicken Professor."

It took but a moment for Ben Halliday to assure himself that Lohman was dead. Then he turned and hurried to the telephone. His efforts to get the operator at the Bartley central office were in vain. The telephone was evidently dead. Perhaps the gale had blown down the wires. It frequently happened—and yet the fact that the instrument would not function added not a little to Halliday's apprehension.

What had happened to the girl? Had she found the body after she left the telephone and fled from the house in terror? Had she met the murderer and shared the fate of the Professor? Had she herself slain the man? But why would she have done such a thing? Halliday asked himself all these questions, but was unable to supply himself with the answers.

Wishing that he had brought a gun, Ben turned from the useless telephone. There was the basement yet to explore. He dreaded to think what he might discover there. Going to a window in the living-room, Ben looked across the flat, snow-covered lawn. The coupé and his trouble-truck, their lights shining through the storm, still stood on the highway. He turned and sought the basement. There was no furnace. The place contained the usual conglomeration of stuff to be found in a farmhouse cellar. In one corner, on a base of concrete, stood an electrical unit such as is used to produce light and power on modern farms. Ben wondered if there were electric lights in the house and he had overlooked them. A thorough search revealed no trace of the girl, or any other human being, dead or alive. Ben was puzzled, and his alarm was still greater as he went back upstairs. Without looking again into the kitchen, he hurried from the house.

The storm was momentarily increasing in fury. He could but dimly see the glow of the lights from the two machines on the highway. The thought struck him that perhaps the girl had missed him and returned to her car—was waiting there now. He decided to go and see. If she were not there, he would return and search the outbuildings. Of course, he must notify the authorities of the murder, but that could wait until he had done all he could toward finding the girl who might be alive and in peril.

Lighting his way with his electric torch, he started along the drive, his head bowed as he leaned against the gale. Suddenly a gasp of surprise escaped him. There in the snow of the drive were the tracks of an auto! For a moment Halliday stood still and played his light on the tire prints. They had not been there when he came along the drive on his way to the house. They had been made a very few minutes, because the rapidly drifting snow had only begun to fill them. A car had come in or gone out that drive while he was in the house!

A few steps, taken while he bent low over the tracks, satisfied Halliday that the car had gone out. The direction in which the tires had thrown the loose snow proved that. Running with long strides, Ben reached the highway. Here the car had turned west in the direction of Milton City. It was a light car—Halliday could tell that

from the slight depth of the tracks and the way the car had slid and wobbled as it plowed through a drift. A car had gone and the girl was gone. Ben put two and two together quickly and saw no need of going into higher mathematics.

Ben Halliday wasted no time in pondering. Dashing to his heavy trouble-truck, he leaped into the cab and started the motor. The blizzard was now on in earnest. The snow was falling in swirling white masses which mingled with those swept up from the ground by the howling gale and made a thick curtain through which the powerful lamps of the truck could pierce but a few rods.

With gears howling, Ben swung the truck around the stalled coupé and flung it into the raging storm. He could still see the tracks of the mystery car, so it could not be far ahead of him. It would not take such a storm more than five minutes to erase those tire marks. The heavy truck, in second gear, plunged on through the steadily mounting drifts. The grim-faced driver kept it on the road more by "feel" and a keen sense of direction than by vision.

"They won't get far in this with a light boat and no chains," Ben Halliday muttered through stiff lips.

Two minutes later the statement proved true. The headlamps of the truck picked up the shape of a snow-plastered light car where it had wallowed into a drift and skidded around with its hind wheels helpless in the deeper snow of the ditch. Its lights were burning. Ben could see nobody in the car. Braking the truck to an abrupt halt, he sat still in the cab for several moments, thinking hard. The car was empty.

"Wonder if whoever was in that bus was damned fool enough to try to hoof it in this," muttered Ben. "A man couldn't make a mile before he froze." His heart sank as he thought how much shorter a distance a girl would be able to cover.

Leaping from the truck, the garage man strode through the drift toward the stalled car. Perhaps he could find and follow their tracks.

"Put up your hands, guy," snarled a voice behind him.

Ben halted in his tracks, then turned with lifted hands to face the speaker. Three feet away were two men. They were not dressed for such weather, wearing only light overcoats over their business suits. A blued-steel automatic in the hand of one of the men covered Halliday unwaveringly.

"Stand awful still, hayseed," shouted the man with the gun, "and keep your mitts in the air. Make a funny move, and I'll burn you down in a minute."

Ben Halliday stood still. What had happened was evident. The men had looked back and seen that the truck was behind them. When their car stalled, they had leaped out and laid in ambush for the machine that was following. They had come around the truck and taken Ben by surprise from the rear.

Ben knew that he was looking into the face of death and his wits grappled desperately with the situation. He found time to wonder what had become of the girl.

"Frisk the hick," the man with the gun snapped at his companion. "He may have a gat."

The thug addressed went around behind Halliday and thrust his hands into the big pockets of the sheep-lined coat. Ben saw a slim chance—and took it gladly. With the speed of a dog-chased cat, the young garage man got into action. His heavily booted foot flashed up out of the snow, and his toe struck the wrist of the hand that held the gun trained on his middle. At the same moment his



upraised arms darted back and his hands closed about the neck of the bandit who stood behind him.

The gun flew from the numbed hand of the man who had held it, and was lost in the drifted snow several yards away. Gripping the neck of the ruffian behind him with all his strength, Halliday bent his virile body forward sharply at the waist. The thug's feet left the ground, and he was catapulted over Ben's head to crash against the bumper and radiator of the truck. He rebounded and fell, a limp heap, in the snow.

Like a flash Ben Halliday

bounded forward, and his big fist in its yarn glove came up from his hip to smash against the jaw of the man from whose hand he had kicked the gun. The fight was over. Both of Ben's assailants lay prone in the drifting snow.

Ben leaped to the truck and snatched a coil of wire with which he dashed back to where the men lay. In short order he had bound the pair hand and foot with the wire. From the one he had flung against the truck,

Ben took a heavy automatic which he dropped into his own pocket. The other crook regained consciousness.

"What did you do with the girl you had with you?" demanded Ben.

"You're crazy," muttered the dazed thug. "We left the twist in— We didn't have any dame with us."

"Huh," grunted Halliday. "You left her where?"

"Try to find out," snarled the bound thug, now fully conscious.

"I'll find out—don't worry," said Halliday grimly.

He picked up the two hoodlums and tossed them into the back of the trouble-truck. He covered them with a tarpaulin and then headed the truck back toward the Lohman place.

As he turned the truck into the drive, Ben Halliday saw that there was a light burning in the living-room of the mystery house. Quickly he switched off the truck lights and cut the motor. The big machine coasted to a stop a dozen yards from the front door of the house.

Jumping from the cab, he strode through the deepening snow to a window.

The room, brightly lighted by a large electric bulb in ceiling fixture, was empty. Here was another puzzle. Who had switched on that light? The girl?

There was one sure way to find out. Halliday plowed his way to the door. It opened, and he stepped into the lighted room. The automatic taken from the captive thug was in his hand. Inside the door he stood still for several moments, listening sharply. The house was as silent as the tomb. Quickly Halliday stripped off his knitted gloves. Then, with the automatic gripped firmly in his big hand, he searched the house for the second time that night. As he went from room to room he turned on the electric lights and left them burning. When he reached the kitchen and switched on the lights, he gave a grunt of astonishment. The body of the murdered professor had disappeared!

Ben Halliday blinked and looked again. His eyes had not fooled him. The body was gone! The linoleum was still wet where the blood had been mopped up. Ben's spine tingled. This was becoming an exceedingly dizzy business. He walked across the kitchen and tried the door. It opened onto a back porch, snow-covered but sheltered from the wind by the bulk of the house.

The condition of that thick carpet of snow told Ben that nobody had left the house by that exit for at least a couple of hours. He closed the outer door, crossed the kitchen and opened the door which led to the basement. He found the switch which turned on the lights downstairs.

Then, gun ready for action, he peered warily into the littered cellar. But it was empty. Halliday

went quickly down the steps and in five minutes had made absolutely sure

that no person was hiding behind or under any of the numerous objects with which the place was congested.

Back upstairs, he made another swift round of the rooms. There was nobody in

the house. Baffled, half-angry, and thoroughly alarmed for the safety of the girl who had called herself Eve Cartwright, Ben Halliday stood for a few moments in the living-room, thinking hard. The gale still howled outside, rattling the window-sashes and pelting the panes with snow.

Halliday strode to the door and stepped out into the storm. With a glance at his snow-covered truck, he turned and waded through the drifts, circling the house. The circle complete, Ben hastened to the truck. The two captives might be able to clear up this latest mystery, if they would.

Anyway, Ben reflected, he couldn't leave them there to freeze to death. He dragged away the tarpaulin and shouldered the nearest of the captives like a sack of oats. Striding through the snow to the house, he dumped the fellow inside and went back for the other.

"I'm sorry," growled Halliday as he stood looking down at the wire-bound thugs on the floor, "but I can't take the chance of untying you guys. I'll try to build up the fire and warm you up, but first I want to know what you did with the girl who telephoned from this house a couple of hours ago."

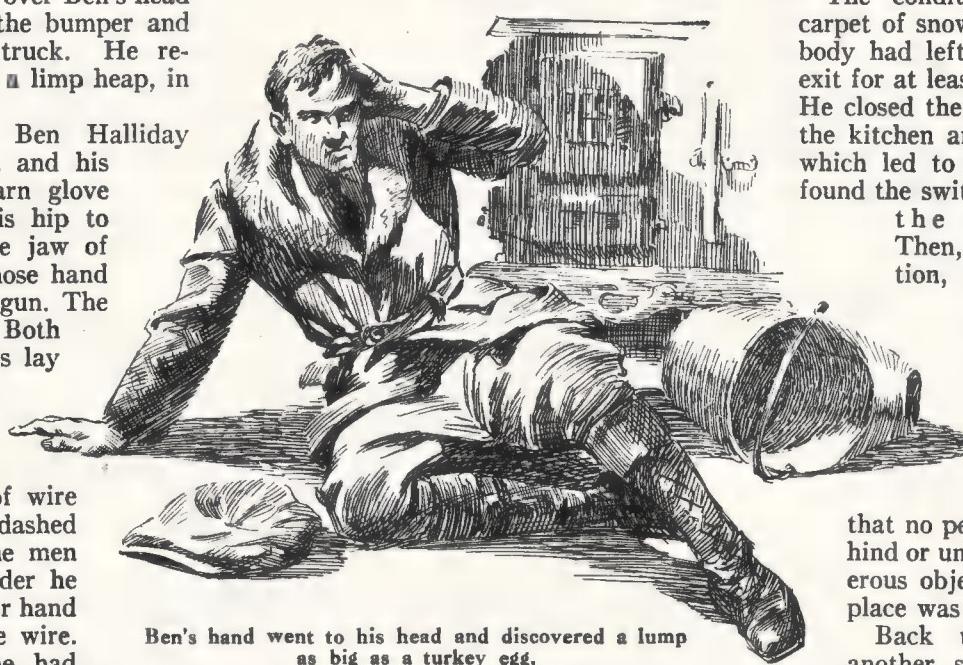
"We don't know anything about any skirt," muttered the biggest of the pair.

"You're lying," snapped Ben. He hadn't forgotten what the fellow had said as consciousness was returning after the battle on the highway.

The hoodlum did not reply. Both captives were shivering and their teeth were chattering from their recent exposure. In spite of everything, Halliday felt a pang of pity for their sufferings. It was getting decidedly cold in the house.

"I'll build up the fire," said Ben. "But when you get warm, you're going to tell me what you did with the girl—and don't fool yourselves about that!"

They did not answer.



Ben's hand went to his head and discovered a lump as big as a turkey egg.

When he had walked around the outside of the house, Halliday had noted a small shed several yards from the kitchen porch. He surmised that it would contain coal and kindling. He picked up an empty coal pail which stood beside the living-room stove and went toward the kitchen.

As he stepped out into the kitchen, his head seemed suddenly to burst. Blackness closed about him and he seemed to be floating in dark, soundless space—oblivion.

WHEN Ben's senses came swimming back from the void into which they had departed, his first realization was that the light shining in his eyes hurt them fearfully.

He groaned and rolled over. That helped somewhat, but his head ached as though it would split. Then he remembered—rolled back over and sat up. He was weak and dizzy. He saw that he was sitting on the floor of the kitchen. Beside him lay the empty coal pail and his heavy cap.

His hand went to his head and discovered upon it a lump as big as a turkey egg. His hair was wet. He looked at his hand and saw that his fingers were bloody. Still half dazed, he picked up his cap and put it on. That thick cap had kept the blow which felled him from bashing in his skull as that of the chicken Professor had been crushed. His wits clearing fast, Ben struggled to his feet. A glance at the watch on his wrist told him that he had been unconscious for at least fifteen minutes. His hand went into the pocket of his big coat and found the gun.

"Huh," grunted Halliday.

With the weapon in his hand and his step still a bit unsteady, Ben hastened to the living-room. The two bound thugs still lay on the floor. Blood was running from the mouth of the smaller of the pair. He had started to work with his teeth on the frosty wire which bound the other crook's wrists and had torn the skin off his lips.

Seeing that his captives were safe, Ben went back to the kitchen. He opened the back door and saw the footprints of two men in the carpet of snow on the porch. His assailants, then, had gone that way. He found his flashlight and started to follow the tracks. The trail was not long.

The rascals who had felled him had fled in Ben's truck. The tracks made in departure were not yet filled. Stumbling through the storm, Ben followed them down the drive to the highway. The truck had turned toward Bartley. The girl's coupé, its lights still gleaming through the swirling snow, was where it had been. The garage man hurried back to the house.

He entered by the kitchen door, meaning to get the coal pail and carry out his interrupted plan to build up the fire in the living-room. As he stepped into the kitchen he saw that the door leading to the cellar was standing open. Ben had left it closed. The men who had attacked him must have come up from the basement—but where in thunder, Ben asked himself, could they have been hidden? After a glance into the living-room which assured him that his prisoners were still safe, Halliday turned back to have another look through that basement. Something told him that if he could find the place where his attackers had been hidden, he would find the missing girl. He carried the automatic ready as he went to the stairway.

THE lights in the basement, as well as all over the house, were still burning. As Halliday reached the bottom of the wooden stairs a sound reached his ears which caused him to stiffen and stand motionless, listening intently. The sound was repeated. It was faint and muffled—but unmistakably a cry of distress in a feminine voice.

"Hello," bellowed Ben with all the force in his powerful lungs. "Where are you?"

The basement and the rooms above reverberated with the sound. As silence settled, Halliday stood listening with straining ears.

Again came that muffled, seemingly far-away feminine cry. This time its owner was screaming a message, but Ben could not make out the words. The voice was too faint.

He called loudly again and again the voice screamed its futile answer. It was ten minutes before Halliday determined that the voice came from beneath the concrete floor of the cellar. Another ten minutes was spent in a minute search of the floor. There was no trapdoor. The floor was a solid sheet of concrete. The walls were of hollow tile, laid with mortar and there was no break in them. The cry of distress was coming faintly at intervals.

Angered and baffled, Ben Halliday halted beside the bulky electric unit and stood wrestling with the problem. Then it came to him that there was something queer about that plant. He had seen numbers of its kind. Finally, he determined what was wrong. All the insulated wires which led away from the dynamo were much longer than necessary. They hung loosely; several sagged and lay on the concrete floor.

An understanding gleam came to Ben's blue eyes. . . . The plant was set on a block of concrete which raised it some five inches higher than the rest of the basement floor. Ben had noticed a heavy crowbar standing in a corner and had wondered at its presence. Now he bent over and began to examine closely the angle where the base of the plant joined the floor. He found the spot he had been looking for. A moment later he had inserted the crowbar under one end of the heavy base and was prying up. The plant, base and all, raised easily. It was a counter-balanced lid, covering an opening in the floor.

The voice of the girl now came in a much clearer and louder volume. Ben dashed down a flight of stairs revealed by the lifting of the plant base and opened a heavy wooden door at their lower end.

"Thank heaven!" came the girl's voice in a cry of relief.

HALLIDAY had burst into a large sub-basement which was outfitted with several littered work-benches and a printing press. Bound hand and foot, the girl lay on the floor beside the press. Her bound hands were tied to a leg of the heavy piece of machinery. Ben dug a knife from his pocket and speedily cut her loose.

"What's it all about, Miss Cartwright?" he asked as he helped her to her feet.

The top of the girl's head barely reached the big fellow's chin. As she smiled up at him, Ben thought again that he had never seen so beautiful a face.

"Tell me what happened to you and how you found me," answered the girl. "Then I'll tell you the rest of the story. Four men have slipped through my hands tonight whom I would have given anything in the world to have turned over to the police."

"Two of them haven't slipped," grinned Ben, "unless they did it in the last fifteen minutes. Let's go up where I left them. We can talk there. There's still a dead man around somewhere to be accounted for."

"He's over there against the wall, covered with papers," said the girl with a shudder. "Leave him there for the moment. Are you joking or have you honestly got two of them prisoner?"

"Come and look at them," invited Ben.

Upstairs, the girl gave a cry of delight as she saw the two men on the living-room floor. There had been little danger of them freeing themselves from the heavy wire



His big fist in its yarn glove came up to smash against the jaw of the man.

with which Ben had bound them. The girl listened to Ben's story in attentive silence.

"Good work," she said when Halliday finished. "If we could only catch the other two, it would be perfect."

She reached into a pocket of her fur coat and pulled out a silver shield which she displayed to Ben.

"Secret service," she said simply. "Here's the rest of the story. I refused to stay in Bartley tonight because I was supposed to join one of my fellow-workers in Milton City. I was to identify several men whom we had reason to believe were in town. The man I was to join had never seen them. When my car broke down I came up to this house, found nobody home apparently and, noting that the door was unlocked, entered in search of a telephone. I found the phone and called you."

"Then I thought I might as well remain in the shelter until I saw your car arrive. I had a flashlight and I noticed the books. Wondering what the farmer occupants of the house would choose for their library, I was idly inspecting the shelves when I heard a door open and some one enter the back of the house."

"I turned and made ready to explain my presence. Then the electric light came on and I found myself covered by the guns of two of the men I had come West to identify. They recognized me and called two others. I realized that I had stumbled into the headquarters of the counterfeiting gang on whose trail we have been working for a couple of years. They made me prisoner and took me to the hidden plant in the sub-basement. I learned from listening to them that they had killed the leader and brains of the gang only a short time before."

"The chicken Professor!" exclaimed Ben.

"We know him as Toff Tancock," smiled the girl. "He is—was—the world's premier counterfeiter. They had killed him and were gathering up the stock of nearly per-

fect counterfeit twenties. It seemed that there was about half a million of the stuff. They meant to split it and go separate ways, passing it as quickly as they could before leaving the country. When they had the stuff all gathered into bundles, these two fellows you have here suddenly pulled guns on the other two and made them prisoner the same as me. Then they took the bundles and went, leaving me and the other two in the sub-cellars."

She shivered at the recollection of her peril. After a moment she continued:

"You must have entered the house just after they had left to get their car, which was in a shed somewhere out back. Those bundles of bad money will be in the car beside which they attacked you, I expect."

"The two they had left with me down below worked themselves loose in about a half hour. They went upstairs, leaving me behind. I was gagged with a pocket handkerchief, but I chewed it in two shortly after they left. I must have been screaming for help about the time they clubbed you and escaped with your truck. You say this telephone is dead. Is there any way that we can get these two to Bartley? I must get to a wire and get in touch with my chief. I've got the best news for him that he's heard in a long, long time."

"I've been thinking," answered Halliday; "the Professor had a car—a good one. I'll take a look for it."

BEN found the big closed car in the garage. He put the chains on it. Fifteen minutes later the car plowed down the drive and began to battle the blizzard toward Bartley. Ben Halliday was at the wheel and Eve Cart-

Mystery Haunts the Storm

wright sat beside him. The two prisoners were in the back.

Ben's face was set and grim as he peered intently ahead into the raging storm and fought the wheel as the car wallowed through the rapidly deepening drifts. The girl's eyes scanned that lean, grim face with its deep tan and there was admiration in their dark depths.

Two miles or a little less from Bartley, Ben Halliday suddenly applied the brakes and brought the big car to a skidding halt. They had almost crashed into the bulky trouble-truck, stalled in the middle of the highway. Ben was to learn later that the radiator solution had frozen and the hot engine had stuck. Even as the car stopped a bullet shattered the windshield and plucked at the shoulder of Ben's coat. He grabbed the girl and dragged her down below the shelter of the cowl.

More bullets tore through the car above them. There was a cry of pain from one of the prisoners in the back seat. Ben opened the door on his side of the car and tumbled out into the driving storm. He had seen the flashes as the two crooks fired from where they had crouched in the shelter of the trouble-truck. With the automatic which he had dragged from his pocket he opened fire—emptying the weapon at the two forms, dimly visible through the swirling masses of white.

Now both those dark forms were prone in the snow. Then there was another flash and Ben felt a sting in his right thigh. At least one of the enemy was still alive and able to shoot.

A gun spoke close beside Ben and as he turned quickly he saw that the girl had risen and was firing through the opening where the windshield of the car had been. There was another flash from the gun beside the truck. The wind swept the girl's sharp cry to Ben's ears and he saw her crumple into the seat.

Suddenly berserk, Ben Halliday leaped through the snow toward the dark form that had risen to a sitting position and was leveling a gun. As he sprang, Ben threw the empty weapon in his hand with all his might and fury. It struck the thug in the chest and sent him over backwards. The next moment Halliday landed on the fallen foe like a ton of brick. . . .

It was a minute before Ben realized that he was choking a dead man. The man had died gamely trying to fire one more shot at his foe. The other thug lay prone in snow stained red with the life-stream which had gushed from a bullet wound in his neck.

Ben dashed back to the auto. The girl was slumped, white-faced and unconscious, in the seat, but was breathing and her pulse was fairly strong. Halliday darted around the auto and climbed under the wheel.

Five minutes later the big car roared out of the night and stopped in the drive beside the home of Doctor Lothar Egen in Bartley. It was half-past ten o'clock. The doctor, roused from his bed, opened the door to find that the person who had been kicking the panels was Ben Halliday, bearing an unconscious girl in his arms.

It was nearly three weeks later when Eve Cartwright left Bartley. The bullet of the counterfeiter had pierced her right shoulder, high up. The night before she left, Ben Halliday stayed very late at the Egen home where Eve had been kept.

Since then Ben has been receiving two and sometimes three letters each week from Washington. The last few of those letters, if you insist on reading somebody else's mail, have been arguments pointing out that Washington is a city of opportunity for an able young mechanic with five thousand dollars of reward-money to invest.

Ben Halliday's garage at Bartley is being advertised for sale.

His Wonders To Perform

By EWING

WALKER

THAD NEWSOME rode his gaited mule along the sandy road that follows the river a matter of four miles and then abruptly flounces to the right as though irked by such heavy going and, entering the hills, becomes a clay road.

Thad was feeling mighty good. The day was hot, but the water-oaks and the sweet-gums and the sycamores tempered the road with comforting splotches of dankish shade.

Abruptly, he pulled on the rope reins of his bridle, halting his mule, for overhead he had seen eight or ten buzzards, now investigatively sailing and soaring and dipping, then flapping their wings, as though they had changed their minds and would have one more look before coming to earth.

"Somethin' over around old man Dawson's place," mused Thad.

He hooked one leg over the horn of his saddle and waited. He did not have long to wait. In ten minutes or such a matter the sky was free of buzzards; they had settled upon the earth.

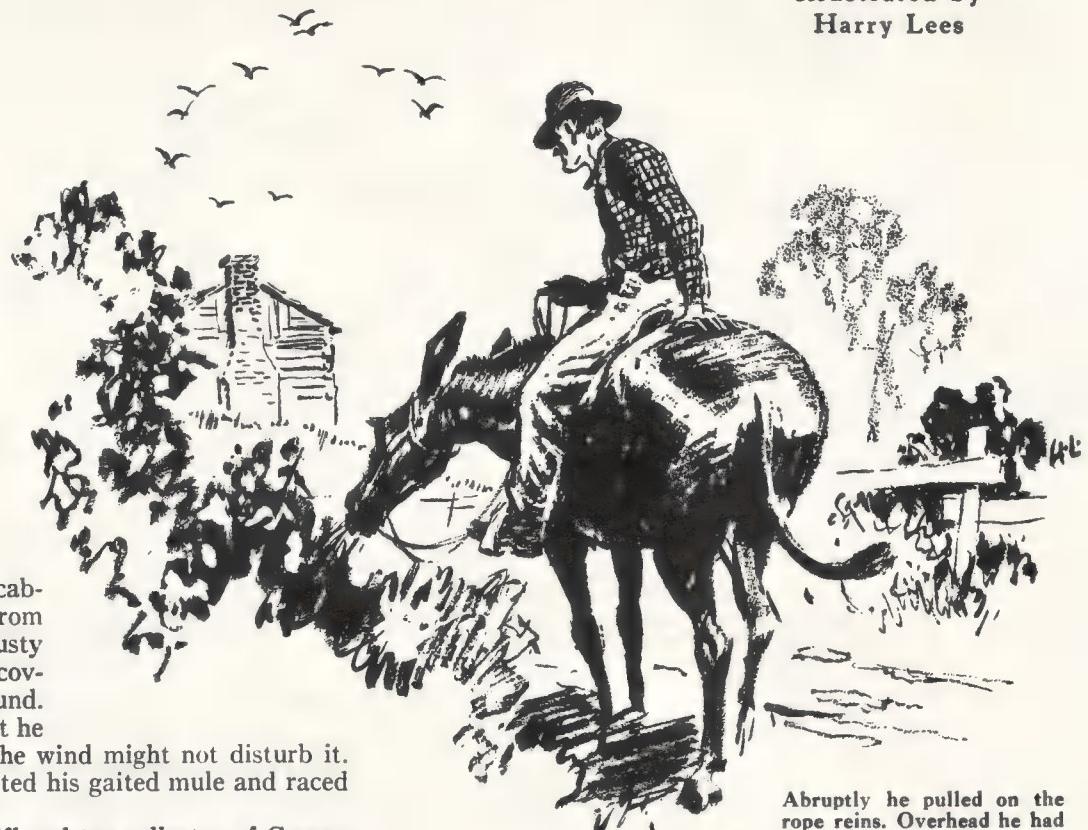
Thad kicked his mule. A furlong farther down the road, he turned into a narrow lane that led past his own frame dwelling and a half-mile beyond, halted at Uncle Lem Dawson's mud-chinked log cabin. At the gate of the split-picket fence he halted, dismounted and glanced about him. The cabin door was open. That was unusual. He peered in; all seemed in order—that is, all save the water-bleached pine table. On that was a glass half filled with milk—now clabbered—a fragment of corn-pone, a partially consumed slice of salt pork.

Thad backed to the center of the grassless yard. Something was wrong—powerful wrong—he reflected. Uncle Lem had always been close, and methodical; it wasn't like him to leave an unfinished meal nor to waste any part of a meal. And he had left that particular meal a good many hours before. The clabbered milk proved as much.

A movement in a small patch of broom sedge thirty or forty yards from the cabin attracted Thad's attention. He walked toward it. Halfway there he halted, swallowing. He had seen the tips of two black wings show for a moment above the waist-high grass. He turned toward the gate, then thought better of it and resolutely went on toward the patch of sedge.

At his approach, ten or a dozen buzzards clumsily flapped away. Advancing gingerly, he craned his neck toward the spot from which they had risen. He shuddered and momentarily closed his eyes. His heart raced. What was upon the ground before him had once been a man.

"Sometimes, the evidence you got on a criminal," says Sheriff Tobe Elliott, "don't count half as much as the evidence what he's got on himself."



Thad hurried back to the cabin, entered it and jerked from the bed a soiled and musty crazy-quilt. With this he covered that which he had found. Upon each corner of the quilt he placed a pine-knot, so that the wind might not disturb it. Moistening his lips, he mounted his gaited mule and raced toward town. . . .

Private Tobe Elliott, Sheriff and tax collector of Cooper County,—as you may remember, his title of "Private" came to him after attending several Confederate reunions and deciding that he and his old friend Cap'n Busby were just about the only privates in the late lamented Confederate army,—had moved his chair to escape a shaft of sunlight streaming through a window of his office; his shoes were unlaced; his hands—somewhat wrinkled and large-veined these past few years—were folded upon his lap, and his chin rested upon his chest. Comfortable—plumb comfortable and content! His clerk and deputy worked quietly; for half an hour or longer, none had come to disturb the pleasing tranquillity of his office. Private Tobe dozed.

Then Thad Newsome burst in. His yellow-gray eyes were staring; sweat dripped from his forehead and cheeks. "Sheriff!" he gasped. "Somethin's happened!"

Private Tobe's hands remained upon his lap, but his eyes opened—slowly. "Spect so, Thad. Somethin' most usually is—plenty. Take right now: Me dozin', sun shinin', clock runnin', you bustin' in. . . . Yep, things do keep right on happenin', spite o' whatever you do."

Thad bent over him. "Uncle Lem Dawson's dead!" At that, Private Tobe straightened. "Where at?" "Down't his place. I was ridin' 'long—"

IN less than an hour, Private Tobe was driving his fiv-ver along that sandy river road, then along that clay road that ultimately leads to Dawson's cabin. At his side sat Coroner Rawls; jouncing about on the rear seat was Deputy Sheriff Toulmin. At a gradually increasing distance behind rode Thad Newsome on his gaited mule.

Private Tobe, his deputy and the coroner waited at Uncle Lem Dawson's gate until Thad arrived.

"Now, Thad," began Private Tobe, when the other had dismounted, "start at the beginnin' and tell us all about it."

Thad did. He was particularly pleased to call their attention to the clabbered milk, feeling that would in a measure time the crime. Too, his realizing its importance proved him a man of discernment.

"Must 'a' killed him as he et," offered Private Tobe.

Abruptly he pulled on the rope reins. Overhead he had seen eight or ten buzzards.

"No, they didn't," Thad Newsome countered.

"How come?"

"Cause they aint no blood in the cabin."

Private Tobe entered the small log dwelling and squinted about. He looked up admiringly. "Thad, you're right smart of a detective."

Thad accepted that with seemly modesty. "He was killed right where I found him."

"Was? How you figure that?"

"They aint no sign in the sedge o' his bein' drug along."

"Somebody might 'a' toted him."

"Huh!" Thad recalled Uncle Lem's two hundred-odd pounds. "Nobody I know could!"

"Spect you're right," conceded Private Tobe. "Let's take a look."

There was no evidence of the body having been dragged along. A few blades of the tall autumn-dried grass were bent or broken as by a man walking, but there was no broad pathway of bent-over sedge. No, the body of Uncle Lem Dawson had not been dragged to the spot where it now lay under its crazy-quilt.

As the four men approached that spot, a dozen or more buzzards rose. Thad, halting, moistened his lips. "You reckon the quilt blowed off him?"

They hurried along. The quilt had not blown off; and now they realized the buzzards had risen from a point perhaps twenty feet away, though whatever had lured them there was invisible from where the men stood.

Thad smiled relievedly. "Hit's just his dawg."

They proceeded to that spot. It was Uncle Lem's dog,—or what had been his dog,—an oversized cur that had shown in its shaggy near-black coat a touch of shepherd dog and in the contour of its head a trace of bulldog.

Private Tobe seemed mightily interested in the dog. He studied it so long that Thad and the others wondered, for he had not yet lifted so much as a corner of the crazy-quilt. Still squatting before the dog, he turned his head. "Thad, step along over to the cabin and see can you find a spade."

Thad left. As he did so, Private Tobe bent over the dog and with a blade of his knife drew from between two of its teeth something which, a trifle furtively, he wrapped in a small piece of paper. This he placed in a pocket of his coat.

Thad returned with a shovel, a hole was dug, and the dog removed from sight. Then they turned to the object under the crazy-quilt. . . .

Uncle Lem Dawson was buried in the cemetery of Shiloh Church. The countrymen present—there were close upon a hundred—decorously and stolidly attended the rather prolonged discourse of Parson James Buckley, who really did himself proud. Now and then, numerous heads were gravely nodded, but whether in admiration of the parson's inventiveness or merely because it was the thing to do, is hard to say. If the truth must be told, the encomiums didn't exactly fit Uncle Lem, who had been a vinegary, grasping, crotchety old miser who hadn't seen the inside of a church in three decades. All in all, it was one of the most satisfactory "burlyn's" in the history of isolated Shiloh community, wherein funerals, weddings—with their resultant charivari—and fervent revivals constitute the chief *divertissements*.

Private Tobe did not attend the funeral. In fact, at the hour when he knew Parson Buckley would be going strongest—and warmest—he again entered Uncle Lem Dawson's cabin, this time alone. I but do him justice when I say he examined just about everything in that cabin—floor, walls, ceiling, furniture, cooking-utensils, meager and well-worn clothing. With one exception, he moved nothing. Having seemingly exhausted the possibilities of the cabin, he closed and barred its three wooden windows, closed the door, locked it and placed the key in his pocket. Under his arm was a bulging package wrapped in paper. Within that paper was the crazy-quilt that had served Uncle Lem through many chill nights and that had finally served him as a temporary shroud.

In due course, Coroner Rawls rendered his verdict. It was grandly long and full of many-syllabled words stating, with plenty of *know ye's* and *whereases*, that one Lemuel Dawson met his death at the hands of an unknown assassin, wielding a blunt instrument, on or about the fourth day of August nineteen hundred and thirty A. D. It was one of the most readable verdicts Coroner Rawls had ever penned. Many a stiff and toil-roughened finger avidly traced its way through it, and, once at the end, started all over again; and many a farmer of Cooper County decided, after enjoying that document, that Coroner Rawls was a mighty good man for the job and would certainly get his vote at the next election.

Sheriff Tobe Elliott's conduct, following the passing of Uncle Lem, disturbed his supporters, delighted his opponents—who, for a good many years, have futilely tried to defeat him—and mystified both. Apparently he made no effort to apprehend or even discover the murderer of Uncle Lem Dawson. Each day he went to his office, unlaced his shoes, selected his most comfortable chair and nodded. His busiest moments seemed to be those when he shifted his chair to escape the sun.

September passed. No one was arrested; no one was questioned, so far as could be learned. The Minniesburg Weekly *Bugle*, previously mildly exercised, grew pointedly

and volubly insistent. October came. Private Tobe now was shifting his chair to follow the band of sunlight in his office, for the days were cool and the heating equipment of the courthouse was pronouncedly inadequate. The *Bugle* waxed sarcastic. The early part of November rolled around, and the *Bugle* grew downright vitriolic. Not only had the "sinister culprit, that had removed from our midst our late and esteemed fellow-countian, Lemuel Dawson, not been apprehended,"—the *Bugle* is given to long sentences; they are so much more toothsome than the metropolitan style,—but another dastardly crime had been perpetrated in the heretofore peaceful Shiloh community: The residence—it's two rooms and a built-on shed—of Mr. Thaddeus Newsome was feloniously entered and robbed sometime between eight in the morning and four-fifteen in the afternoon of November seventh. While always manifesting patience and exercising forbearance toward others, the *Bugle* felt the time had come for our Sheriff to throw off his apathy and bestir himself.

Even his deputy expostulated. "Sheriff, aint there nothin' you can do?"

"Sure there is, son." Deputy Toulmin is in his early sixties himself, but Private Tobe "sons" most every male acquaintance. "Sure there is—plenty. For one thing, I could step out and arrest the fellow what killed old Uncle Lem."

Deputy Toulmin sat up. "You know who he is?"

"Know? Sure I know. Been knowin' for the longest."

"Then why, under high heaven, don't you go get him?"

Private Tobe thoughtfully pursed his lips a moment. "Son, when you get to be as old as me, you'll understand some things better. I know just who killed old Lem and I even got some evidence; but it's mighty little and it's mighty slim. Aint no jury livin' that'd hang a houn-dawg on it after some smart lawyer got through provin' that same evidence would fit a dozen or more. No, suh, arrestin' him on what evidence I got just nachally wouldn't do." He bent over, reluctantly lacing his shoes. "Oh, well, maybe the Lord'll p'int a way, 'cause you know, son, 'The Lord pursues mysterious ways, his wonders to perform.'" Private Tobe wasn't quite sure about the words, but he conveyed the sense of it.

It was all too deep for Deputy Touimin. "But—but what about the robbin' of Thad Newsome's house? The *Bugle's* raisin' sand about that, too."

"Yes, suh, they sure is—raisin' sand a-plenty; but I 'spect they'll just have to keep right on for a spell. You see, son, I sort o' hate to arrest that burglar."

Mr. Toulmin stiffened. "You know him too?"

"Course I know him; you might say him and me's real intimate friends." He smiled drolly. "A fellow just nachally hates to arrest one o' his best friends."

Thad had been robbed; though why anyone would rob Thad none could say. As Private Tobe confided to his deputy, "I'll bet the fellow what robbed him went in debt." Anyway, he had been robbed and had hastened to town on his gaited mule and, eyes wide, had reported the outrage to Private Tobe.

"What'd he get?" asked Tobe.

"A pair o' britches and a clock and a scovil hoe."

"That all?"

Thad did some heavy thinking. "Nowt I think of it, they was a crowbar, too."



There flashed into the range of Thad's vision a racing dog. . . . He pulled both triggers.



"I see," nodded Private Tobe with an air indicating he didn't see at all. "And all this durin' the day, huh?"

"Yes, suh! Broad-open day. Me and my wife come to town that mornin'. Member I seen you?"

"Yep, sure do."

"Well, we got back 'long 'bout five in the evenin'—and I hadn't no more'n got in the house 'fore I seen what'd happened."

"That's sure mighty bad; but you didn't lose a heap," comforted Private Tobe. "Course, everybody needs a hoe and a clock; and britches come in right handy at times themselves. Was they new ones?"

"Nope, 'most wore out; but—"

"How 'bout the crowbar? Use it a heap?"

"Mighty seldom. Aint used it in the longest; but that don't spell I want somebody stealin' it."

"Course not. Things sure gettin' in a bad way," conceded the county's Sheriff—who was supposed to keep them in a good way.

Being a duly elected officer of the county and a servant of the people—and Thad certainly was one of the people—Private Tobe drove out to Thad's place and looked the situation over. By crowding his gaited mule, Thad got there only a few minutes later. Private Tobe could find no clue to britches, clock, crowbar or hoe. "Maybe they'll turn up," he encouraged half-heartedly.

Thad certainly hoped so, 'cause a poor man like him couldn't afford to be losin' what little he'd got only by the hardest!

The next morning Private Tobe carried his old telescope-bag to his office. "I'll be gone for a spell," he explained to his deputy and clerk. "See you when I see you."

"Business?"

"Well, business or pleasure; you can have your pick. Goin' dog-huntin'."

"Dog-huntin'?"—wonderingly.

"Dog-huntin'. If the *Bugle* wants to know, tell 'em I'm takin' a vacation; tell 'em my onerous duties durin' the past few months got me just about wore down."

Sheriff Tobe was gone nine days. Upon his return, he

did seem improved. There was the faintest hint of cockiness in his bearing; maybe his smile was a bit broader and easier to fetch. And he should have been improved, for he'd been blithely seeing the world. In fact, he had visited exactly nineteen towns, two cities of considerable size and uncounted farms. Despite whatever dallying he may have later indulged in, the first place he visited in each town and city was the dog pound. None was especially sightly, yet he approached each of them with eagerness and zest.

On the day of his return, he made two stops before climbing the worn stone steps of the courthouse and entering his office. The first of these was at his home,—for some reason he drove up the alley—where he unloaded a dog and tied it to a low-limbed

fig tree. It was a rather oversized dog, with long, darkish hair indicating a trace of shepherd-dog ancestry and with a roundish short head bespeaking bulldog lineage. His second stop was at the office of the Minniesburg *Bugle*, where he appraised a slightly disdainful editor that he certainly had had one more good time and felt powerful rested up.

The *Bugle*, two days later, contained some rather pungent lines anent Cooper County's Sheriff and his rest cure.

The day following his return, Private Tobe began that strange daily procedure about which our fellow-countians—apologies to the *Bugle*—still talk occasionally and about which some of them then talked often and plenty. Some, upon witnessing or learning of the strange doings were plumb willing to be quoted as saying it was bad enough to have a Sheriff that wouldn't do nothin', but as for havin' one that had gone strip-stark crazy. . . . Well, that was just goin' too far and they didn't care who knowed they'd said so. Fortunately, not many knew about it, for it all took place on the farm of a friend.

Herewith is a record of that procedure. About an hour before sundown, he would load his rough-coated, oversized dog onto the rear seat of his flivver; on that seat beside the dog he put an undersized darky boy, who never did quite master a fear-born yearning to be somewhere else. Getting into the front seat, Private Tobe drove out the Whitechapel road about three miles, turned in at the farm of his friend Jess Matthews, crossed a goodly part of that farm and halted at a straight and narrow private lane—a lane wholly hidden from the public road. There the three of them got out.

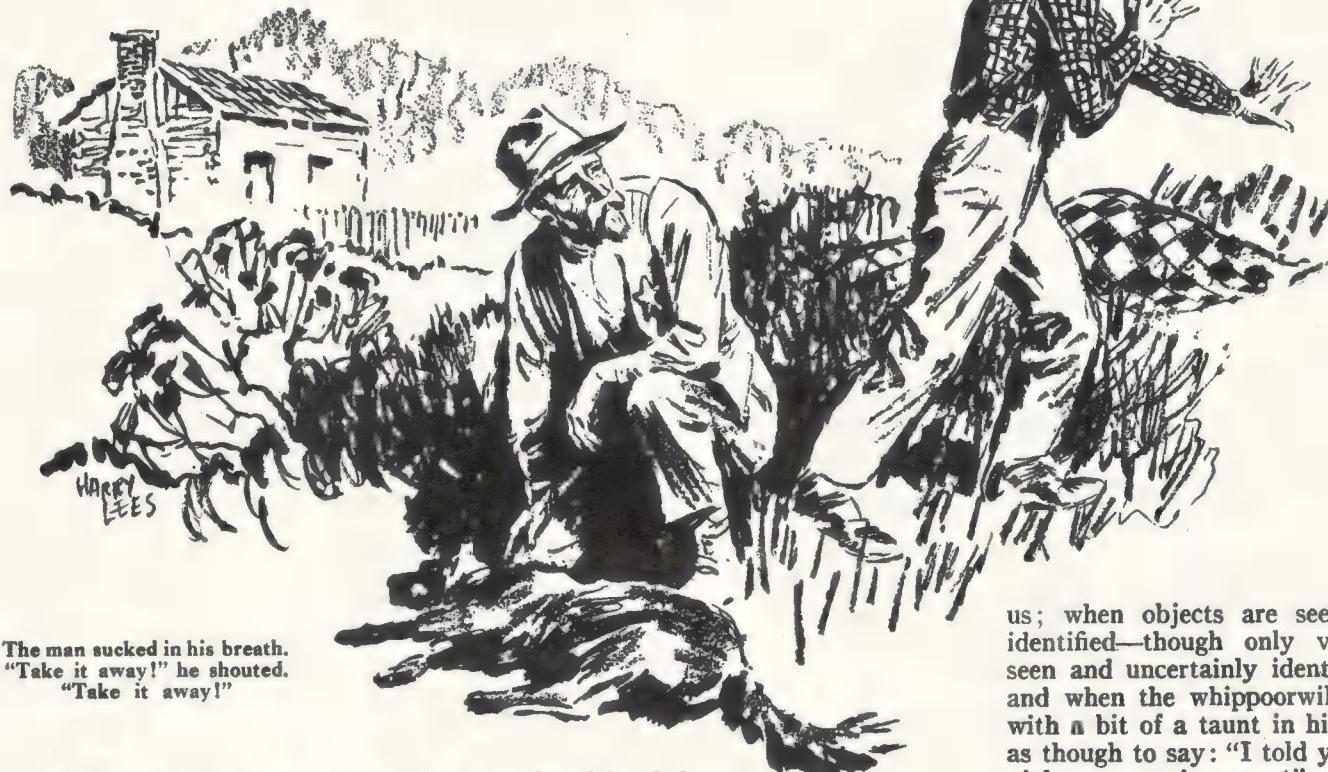
Bracing his thin bandy legs and moistening his rolling lips,—this latter sustains courage almost as much as whistling,—the small darky held the large dog by its collar, as Private Tobe strode down the lane a matter of fifty yards, halted and faced them. Then he whistled. It was not the usual note for the calling of a dog. Instead, it was the call of a whippoorwill. He had learned the trick as a boy, and now he sounded it with arresting fidelity—with its every lilt and its hint of dole and its trace of eeriness. The lowering twilight—when the whippoorwill first ventures abroad—perhaps rendered it the more real.

As Private Tobe sounded his call, the small darky shuddered and released the dog. The first trial or two that oversized mongrel glanced about uncertainly and finally made a leisurely way to Sheriff Tobe, who promptly rewarded him with a scrap of beef. After the fourth or fifth trial, which came upon the second day, the dog went racing down the lane toward the Private—and the beef.

Within the week, the distance had been extended not to a full quarter of a mile, but well over a furlong; yet, when Private Tobe's call sounded—it was faint at that distance—the dog eagerly bounded down the lane.

Private Tobe now was satisfied—and ready. The next afternoon—which was December eighth—he loaded dog

yodel that goes pleasantly rolling far over the hills; when fowl flutter to their perches and, chattering and gossiping a brief while, tuck their heads under their wings and prepare for another day; when farmers are finishing the milking of their cows and the feeding of their stock and preparing to enter their houses. In short, it was that hour when the gossamer threads of which dreams and fancies, hopes and fears, are woven are in the tranquil air about



and darky into his flivver, climbed in himself and headed down that sandy river road that petulantly wheels into the hills and becomes a clay road—and which, too, as you may remember, finally brings one to that lane which passes the house of Thad Newsome and ends at the cabin that had been Uncle Lem Dawson's.

Half a mile before reaching Thad Newsome's small frame dwelling, Private Tobe turned his flivver off into the woods and parked it where it could not be seen from the lane. Then he, the darky and the dog returned to that lane and started silently along it.

With Thad's house a matter of two hundred yards away, but still invisible—what with the dense growth upon either side—the trio halted. Boy and dog waited. Private Tobe turned to the right and, as noiselessly as possible, made his way through the woods until he came to a deep gully or wash roughly paralleling the lane. Along the bottom of this he made his way close upon a quarter of a mile and then wheezingly clambered up its side. Pausing to recover his breath—he'd tell you himself he's not as young as he once was—he again stole through the woods and halted only when once more in the lane. He was now somewhat over two hundred yards beyond Thad Newsome's house.

The sun was down. The outlines of objects about were softened by the gathering twilight. It was that hour when housewives unconsciously find it less lonely if they sing or even hum a bit; when ox-drivers shout their half-

us; when objects are seen and identified—though only vaguely seen and uncertainly identified—and when the whippoorwill calls with a bit of a taunt in his tone, as though to say: "I told you my night was coming soon!"

And a whippoorwill did call—called rather faintly, for it was something over two hundred yards away. At the moment, Thad Newsome was coming from his small log crib and starting toward his small frame dwelling. He heard the whippoorwill, but gave it no thought, for whippoorwills are common with us. Then he paused, listening. Far down the lane, that passes before his gate, a patter sounded—a patter that steadily and rapidly grew more distinct. And then Thad's head came forward and his eyes widened as a dog sped by—an oversized dog with long rough hair, such as a shepherd dog has—and with broad, blunt head, such as a bulldog has. Then the patterning grew faint again and soon the sound of it died. Once more it was still. Not even a whippoorwill called.

Until he retired shortly before eight—one retires early in such communities as Shiloh—Thad wondered about the dog that had raced past his gate. Few diversions and few new experiences come to such as dwell about Shiloh. Variety, in the main, must be of their own creation; and when no other form of it is to be had to relieve the unending drabness and solitude of their lives, they unwittingly strive to fashion in their own groping minds something—anything—to help a little.

Perhaps that is why such as Thad plant cotton and corn only when the moon is just so; why the body of a rattlesnake—no other kind of snake will do—is "cooked down"

and the oil saved for its curative properties; why they know a dream of muddy water means death and a dream of a negro means disappointment and one of sheep means general trouble a-brewing; why walking under a ladder is a thing to avoid, the breaking of a mirror a thing to shun and the crossing before one of a black cat a thing to avert at any cost. I know of no fancy-born good omen in our region; we lack the solace even of the four-leaved clover, for it doesn't grow in our State.

So, Thad wondered a little, even that first evening. The next evening, upon passing from his crib to his house, he spilled a bit of milk from the bucket he carried, for there had come to him from down the lane a whippoorwill's plaintive call and, upon the heels of it, so to speak, a faint patterning sound that quickly grew into a muffled pounding as a great shaggy dog sped by.

THE third day Thad moistened his lips as he stood in his grassless yard—about Shiloh, we do not rake our yards; we sweep them. Then he bit his lower lip. The wind was blowing from him, so he heard it ever so faintly; but hear it he did, then the now-familiar patterning that quickly became a pounding as the dog sped by—the dog that, in the dim light, so disturbingly resembled Uncle Lem Dawson's dog.

By the fifth day, Thad was hurrying through his chores—hurrying so that the gaited mule was carelessly fed and the cow indifferently milked; and he was standing in his yard waiting and wondering, fearing and hoping. Most of all, he was hoping—hoping he would not hear a whippoorwill down the lane and that he would not see a dog madly speeding along that lane, by the side of which he had placidly lived these thirty-odd years. . . .

The sixth day Thad was not there. "I'm goin' away," he told his wife about four in the afternoon. "Won't be back 'fore seven. Now listen to me! At five o'clock you go out an' set on the step an' see can you hear a whippoorwill just 'fore dark down yonder,"—he pointed—"an' see if a dawg comes a-runnin' past the gate."

He saddled his gaited mule and rode down the lane, bound for the home of a neighbor two miles away. He saw no one as he rode along the lane. Whether any saw him cannot be known, for the underbrush there is dense.

At seven he was back. Not waiting to unsaddle his mule, he hurried into the house and confronted his wife. "Hear that whippoorwill?"

"No."

He leaned nearer. "See that dawg?"

She shook her head. "Nothin' went down the lane—not a livin' thing."

He grasped her shoulders. "Don't you lie to me!"

She stared up at him, affrighted. "Thad, what's ailin' you? I didn't hear no whippoorwill an' I didn't see no dawg. They warn't no dawg. What's—"

A long moment he looked at her; then, dropping his hands, laughed sheepishly. "All right. Just wanted to make sure."

He slept better that night. No whippoorwill had called in the twilight and no dog—so resembling another dog—had sped by. Maybe there hadn't been any dog or any whippoorwill on any of those days; maybe they had been but creations of his fancy. Or, if there had been, perhaps now the spell was broken. Probably that was it; most likely his goin' away had broken the spell, just as a nutmeg on a string tied around your neck will stop the flutterin' of the heart or a wooden peg—one of dogwood is best—driven into the north side of the house will discourage spirits. Yes, that must be it: The spell was broken.

The next day—the seventh day—he went about his work almost blithely. Noon came, and he ate heartily. At four

in the afternoon he started upon his daily chores. Still he was blithe—or almost blithe. Five-thirty came, and he started toward his house, a pail of milk in his hand. Midway between crib and house, he halted; he trembled as in the grip of an ague. The spell was not broken, for he had heard, floating through the still air, a whippoorwill's plaintive call; and a few moments later he saw, tearing past his gate, a blunt-headed, shaggy-haired dog. He dropped his pail and fled into the house.

That night he lay down, but he did not sleep. One cannot think and scheme and reason and fear and yet sleep. He was out of bed before daybreak. Quickly getting into his clothes, he took down his double-barreled shotgun and went over it. He cleaned and oiled it thoroughly. Taking two shells from the box, he opened them, made sure each had a full charge of shot, closed them and placed them in his gun. Now he was ready.

At four-thirty in the afternoon he left his house, glanced about to make sure none was watching and took up his position in a corner of his small bare yard—in that corner where the front split-picket fence joins a side fence. He studied the opening between the pickets until he found the one best commanding a view of the lane, and through this he thrust the barrels of his gun. He waited, kneeling, his head below the top of the fence.

He must be steady. He was steady. See? Fingers as motionless as so many "stobs" in the ground. Three times he held his hands before him, to prove just how steady he was. He knew his wife was watching him, her thin cheeks wan and her pale eyes wide; but he couldn't help that. He'd told her to stay in the back room of the house. Ordinarily, she was amenable; but, after all, she was a woman, and he knew she had stolen out from the kitchen, and standing at one side of the window, was watching him. He did not know that a wish to aid him, should he need aid, had fetched her there quite as much as had her curiosity. Probably even she did not realize it.

The sun grew large and crimson. It sank below the tops of the spire-like pines and then below the scrub-oaks and, finally, only a mere glowing tip of it was visible above the underbrush. Thad was glad, for he knew he would have but a little while longer to wait; and he was sorry, for it meant, maybe, he would very soon hear—But he was steady! He managed a chuckle. Sure, he was steady! He held out his hands. Steady as teeth in a harrow. No whippoorwill and no runnin' dog was gonna make him—

He grasped his gun and, crouching, sighted along its barrels. It had come to him, floating through the fading twilight. Maybe now his hands were not wholly steady. He pressed his lips close, so that he would not be moistening them with the tip of his tongue, a process that might interfere with his aim.

NOW the other sound reached him—faint as the call of the whippoorwill, regular as the clicking of a spinning-wheel. It grew rapidly more distinct. Now it was almost upon him. He fancied he could hear each padded foot touch the clay of the lane. There flashed into the range of his vision the racing form of a dog—a dog with near-black shaggy hair and with blunt, rounded head.

He pulled both triggers, flung down his gun, fled into the house and, slamming the door, barred it. A moment he leaned against the door breathing as would a man that has run far.

That night he slept fitfully. But for one thing, he would have slept well: Would the dog—the thing—be lying there in the morning? The thought recurred stubbornly. He knew he had hit it, for he had seen it go down, rolling over once. Would it be there in the morning? Should he go

out into the night now and see? No-o, he'd wait. No hurry—if 'twas dead, no need of goin'; if 'twas *not* dead—Everybody knows you can't hurt n h'ant!

It was not there in the morning. Hurrying back into the house and closing the door, he waited until it was broad day and then went to the lane again. It was not there—not even a drop of blood. It 'peared as though somethin' had sort o' smoothed the ground over where the dog had been—smoothed it over as with the palm of a hand.

Thad remained in his house that day and the next and the third. His wife took over his chores.

ON the fourth day, about ten in the morning, some one at his gate called. Thad opened his door and peered out. It was Private Tobe, his flivver parked by the split-picket fence. Thad was glad it was the Sheriff. Somehow the presence of the law is reassuring. He went out.

"Mornin', Thad."

"Mornin', Sheriff."

"Sort o' late stirrin', aint you?"

"Sort o'. Been kind o' puny here lately."

"That so? Well, now, I'm sorry to hear that. 'Spect you need a course o' medicine." His head turned, his chin tilting a little. "What you reckon that is?" he questioned slowly.

Thad followed his glance. Overhead, eight or ten buzzards were sailing and soaring and dipping, flapping their wings, as though they had changed their minds and would have one more look before coming to earth.

"Uh-huh!" mused Private Tobe. "That's right over by Uncle Lem Dawson's, aint it?"

"I b'lieve—I b'lieve it is," acknowledged Thad.

"Let's go take a look," proposed Private Tobe.

Thad drew back. "Sheriff, you go. I aint feelin' so spry this mornin'."

"Come along, Thad, come along. Little ja'nt'll do you good." Thad went.

They came to Uncle Lem Dawson's fence—the fence that had been Uncle Lem's. They crossed the yard toward the squat, mud-chinked log cabin, and, nearing it, turned to the right and continued toward a patch of broom sedge. They came to the edge of the grass and—its stems faintly rustling—entered it. At their approach, eight or ten buzzards awkwardly flapped away. Private Tobe and Thad kept on toward the spot where the buzzards had been. They halted.

"Oh, God!" It was not a shout and it was not a shriek; and yet, in a way, it was both of these.

"What's wrong?" Private Tobe's speech was slow and his tone all but soothing.

"Look—look there!" Thad's pointing finger trembled.

Spread upon the ground before them was a crazy-quilt—the crazy-quilt that had been Uncle Lem's and that, upon that same spot, had once covered Uncle Lem. Once more its four corners were weighted down with as many pine-knots, to prevent the wind disturbing it and revealing what it covered. It seemed now it might be covering the body of a man. Actually, it was covering but two corn sacks stuffed with hay.

"Come on," muttered Private Tobe. "This aint where the buzzards were."

Thad followed him, his eyes staring, his fists clenching and unclenching. He could *not* stay there—by that thing upon the ground at his feet. He followed, to get away from it. Even though he were to come upon something worse, he could not stay there.

Halting, Private Tobe stared at the ground. The man beside him sucked in his breath, as a man struggling to stifle a sob. His eyes closed and then opened, staring a

brief while, and then closed again; his body swayed. "Take it away!" he shouted. "Oh, God, take it away!"

Before him was a dog,—or what had been a dog,—an oversized mongrel with a rough near-black coat bespeaking a trace of shepherd dog and a blunt, rounded head bespeaking bulldog lineage.

"Come along, Thad." As ever, Private Tobe's voice was low, almost soothing. "Maybe a little later I can take it away and"—pausing significantly—"keep it away."

He took the other by the arm and led him across the plot of broom sedge, through the yard that had been Uncle Lem's and on down the lane to his car. Twice along the way Thad stumbled, for his eyes were closed most of the way; twice Private Tobe saw the man's lips move and, though no audible word crossed them, he knew that lurking behind them was the unuttered cry: "Take it away! Take it away!"

Private Tobe lifted from the floor of his car an old pair of trousers and placed them upon the ground and knelt upon the ground before them. "Old, but got some service left in 'em yet." He might have been addressing himself. "Need just a little mendin', though, 'fore bein' wore again." With one finger he touched a small rent. He took from his pocket a folded piece of paper and, opening it, removed four long, coarse threads. These he placed over the narrow tear in the trousers before him. "A plumb good seamstress could put 'em back again. Funny, where I found 'em—'tween a dog's teeth!" He glanced up. "Maybe your wife could mend 'em for you, Thad."

"I don't want 'em, I don't want 'em!" And then, his eyes closing, as though to shut out a dreaded sight—"Take it away!" he whispered.

Private Tobe took from his car a crowbar and held it in his hands, slowly turning it. "Rusty from end to end, 'scusin' a strip right here." One streak, perhaps six inches long, shone bright as a new silver dollar. "Blood's sort o' hard to get off o' things." Again he turned to the other. "How'd you clean it, Thad? Sandpaper or a file?"

Thad sank upon the narrow running-board of the car. "A file," he muttered; then, hiding his face in his hands—"Take it away!" he sobbed. "Oh, God, take it away!"

A third time Private Tobe leaned over the door of his car; and, when next he straightened, in one hand was a cheap gilded clock, such as so many about Shiloh have, and in the other was a hoe—of the sort that we about Shiloh term a scovil hoe. These he placed upon the ground just inside Thad's gate. He had no further need of them. He had taken them from Thad's house, along with crowbar and trousers, merely to render the ostensible robbery real.

HE turned to the other man and placed a hand upon his shoulder. It was not the menacing grip of the law. Rather, it seemed the kindly touch of a comforting friend.

"Shall we take it away now, Thad?" he asked gently.

"Oh, dear God, take it away!" Thad's words were scarcely audible, so tightly did his hands press his lips.

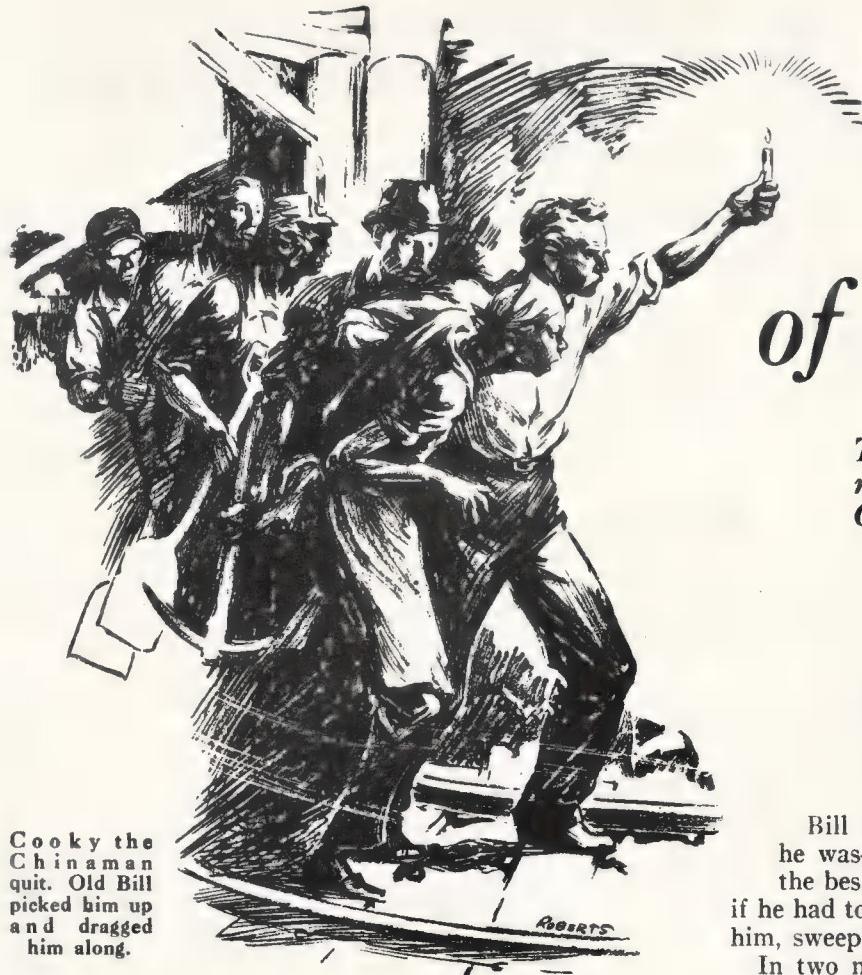
Private Tobe bent over him. "Then tell me, Thad: Where did you hide his money after—you killed him?"

The other peered up at him. "Will that—will that take it away?"—eagerly.

Slowly Private Tobe nodded. "It will, Thad."

The man straightened. An expression of hope—almost of happiness—stole into his eyes as he pointed. "Over there. Under a stump back o' my crib." . . .

In its next issue, the Minniesburg Weekly *Bugle* didn't exactly apologize to Private Tobe Elliott, Sheriff and tax collector, but it did dwell at considerable length upon his rare fitness for office, a fact which it sincerely—and somewhat verbosely—hoped its fellow-countians would bear in mind next election day.



Cooky the Chinaman quit. Old Bill picked him up and dragged him along.

Boss of His Shift

The story of an old hard-rock man who went down into the Glory Hole mine and fought with Death.

By HAROLD
CHANNING WIRE

Illustrated by W. O. Roberts

Bill felt that. It ate away his self-respect. Here he was—he, old Bill Shaw who once could outstrike the best of them, muck his fifty tons of ore to a shift if he had to, timber-up so she'd stay up, and no cave-ins—him, sweeping out the office and keeping the yard clean!

In two months he actually aged years. Square shoulders drooped on his tawny old body. His pride had gone. I could almost see him hang his head. He would come into the office and stand there looking down from my window into the shaft mouth, and say to me: "Why the blighted 'ell couldn't they let a man die like a man—down thur below!"

And there was something else that wore on him. Why had they sent a new shifter in from outside? Why hadn't they let him go on with Eddie a little longer, until he had the boy shaped up for that place? These last few years old Bill had cussed and pounded everything he knew about the Glory Hole, into this young tow-headed Eddie.

Eddie wasn't his son; no relation in any way, just a greenie that old Bill had picked out of the muckers. Bill had no family of his own, but he wanted to pass his knowledge on to somebody. It was in his blood. Bill himself had come from generations of hard-rock men.

Eddie was going to make good too, and pass the trade still further. He had a girl that he was going to marry. Already Bill considered himself a granddad. But they had pensioned him; put in a new shifter—left Eddie out.

Yet circumstance, or life, or whatever you call it, is a strangely just factor—sometimes. Because old Bill was pensioned, he was the only experienced man on top that morning when the Glory Hole caved in.

Frequently he had stormed about the new shifter. "Don't know them thur soapy spots, 'e don't! Don't know whur to put 'is laggin' double. Mind ye, she's goin' to slip. I tell ye! Some o' these days 'im an' 'is men an' the blinkin' mules an' this mine is all gonna be piled in together—mind ye now!"

And they were. From on top you would never have known that anything had happened. The desert hills lay off in all directions hot, red and silent. Cooky the Chinaman was in his shack getting up the noon meal. School

OLD Bill Shaw would ten times rather have died underground than take a pension job on top. But he was put on the shelf for all that. Then what happened has always seemed to me a sure sign of reason in this jigsaw puzzle called Life we are all trying to work out.

Bill Shaw was a Cornishman, and had been "Old" Bill ever since he could remember. He was the sort of man who is tagged that way because of downright affection among other men who have worked with him. He was the best shifter—that is, shift boss—the Mojave deep mines had ever known. Yet it was a fact Bill had now grown old—now it was a matter of years, lungs and a failing heart, although in looks he was still a rugged, lion-bodied man with copper hair turned shaggy and brittle, but not gray.

Being timekeeper for the Glory Hole mine there in Randsburg, I had to hand him the bad news; and I certainly hated it!

He had worked in the Glory Hole for thirty years. Naturally he expected to go on working in her until he dropped. Yet an order had come from the superintendent, a new shifter had turned up, and that morning I had to meet Bill out on the hoist platform.

He was walking to the cage with his shift men around him, ready to go down as usual—lunch pail in one hairy fist, sharpened drills in the other, a fresh candle gripped crosswise in his yellow teeth.

Instinct, or experience, told him what had happened, even before I said a word. The candle dropped from his mouth. He turned to his group of men and grinned.

"Well, boys," he said, "I guess 'ere's a blinkin' new shifter for ye. Good luck!"

Bill's pension job was easy, too easy. It was like telling a man, "You're done."

was letting out, the seven children of our camp coming downhill from the small brown schoolhouse. Behind them was Beth, a bright-haired slip of a thing not more than twenty years old; she was their teacher, and Eddie's girl. It was a peaceful scene all right—but deep in the mountain a stratum of soft rock, a "soapy" spot, had slipped.

The first we knew of it, was the hoist-bell banging the emergency call. You could hear it all over camp. Shack doors opened. Women came out, running.

The hoistman had put on full power and the drums were spinning the cable up. The cage jerked from the hole and stopped.

Only the mule-skinner stepped off, a boy of eighteen, his face like dirty chalk. He couldn't speak, but stood there with his mouth working up and down silently.

Old Bill grabbed him. He jerked the boy's arm and put a hard fist close under his chin.

"Talk, ye blinkin' fool! Whur is ut?" Without being told, Bill knew it was a cave-in.

"Fourteen-hundred level," the boy gasped. "I was goin' in with a string of cars. I sees the shifter run back. The rock came down. They're in there!"

BILL turned to the women. Most of them had been through this before; some of them many times. They were miners' wives. But Beth, Eddie's girl, was young and not yet married. Old Bill went straight to her.

"Mind ye now, no nonsense goes. We'll bring the laddie-buck back to ye. Mind that? All right then, no cryin'. He'll be all right, I tell ye!"

Beth looked up into his hard, fatherly old face—and smiled. "Of course. He'll be all right."

We telephoned to town for men, but it was fifteen miles and they would be half an hour or more in coming up the cañon.

On top there were six of us; old Bill, two muckers who dumped the ore cars, the mule-skinner, the Chinaman and myself. The superintendent was away. The Glory Hole was working only one shift then. The hoistman, of course, had to stay on top to let us down.

Bill's plan was for the six of us to go below and start a coyote-hole in to the trapped men. We could do much before the town crew arrived.

Do you know what it is to be dropped fourteen hundred feet straight into a black hole? And we were dropped too, for that is the way the hard-rock men go underground; no brakes, nothing but a single cable hooked onto the cage, air rushing in a hurricane up through the slatted floor, and your stomach crowding your heart out between your top ribs. Then at the bottom, when the brakes are on at last, you bounce for a minute or two like a ball on a rubber string.

Cooky the Chinaman quit when we stepped out of the cage onto the fourteen-hundred-foot level. He sagged against the timbers, jabbering and shaking his head. Old Bill picked him up and dragged him along.

I have no instinct whatever for being underground. There is a feeling of too much mountain pressing down from on top. And already this mountain had slipped once!

If it hadn't been for the figure of old Bill, tramping ahead of us, I and the others, too, might have followed Cooky's example. But he stalked into the black bore as unconcernedly as if going onto a regular day's shift. Old Bill was a shifter again, underground once more with his crew.

Dust was still thick from the cave-in. It was damp and fouled the air. We coughed till our throats rattled. I thought of old Bill's bad lungs. Our candles made only yellow globes of light in that fog and we stumbled upon the ties of the ore track.

The fourteen-hundred-foot level was narrow and not much more than man-high. Old Bill was peering hard at the timbers.

The cave-in was just ahead of us. Ore tracks ran under a pile of loose rock out of which stuck broken timbers and long splinters of lagging. It looked bad. No telling how far through that mess we would have to run our coyote-hole before reaching the miners entombed by it. No telling, either, if they were still alive. But that was our gamble.

Old Bill had let go his grip on Cooky and the Chinaman was behind the five others of us when we reached the rock.

I don't know whether he started to run out before the crash, or jumped at the same instant. There was a crack like a cannon-shot. Back of us two timbers shattered. The roof gave way. Other posts buckled and snapped in two.

Before anyone except Cooky could move, there came a grind of rock, a boil of dust, then the avalanche of another cave-in. A boulder the size of Cooky himself caught him on the head and he went down beneath the slide.

Men say that a good yell can start a mountain, once it has begun to slip. None of us had yelled. Perhaps it was only the bang of a pick that had loosened the soapy spot again. Our candles went out. In the black bore we fought each other to get away from the slide. I heard the mule-skinner cry like a child. He was pretty young.

Then old Bill started cursing. His great-muscled arms flung out in the dark at us. A good jolt from one of his fists had a strange effect in clearing one's head.

Those next few seconds were the longest a man could ever know. Only a short section of timbering, where we stood, was left to hold the mountain up. Any instant those posts too might buckle. Old Bill had cursed us into a time of sanity. We waited.

The grinding of rock stopped but there remained a constant growl. It was old Bill who struck the first match and lighted his candle. We were caught in a section of tunnel less than ten feet long. Rock of the first slide made a wall at one end—this last slide sealed the other.

Air pipes had been snapped off. We were breathing more than half dust. It was up our nostrils and in our eyes. How long could five men live in a pocket like that? Old Bill's candle burned for a second in the brown fog. Suddenly he blew it out.

Clark, one of the ore-muckers, screamed: "For God's sake, don't!"

You have no idea how terrifying the dark can be. Those men were not cowards.

Dawson, the other mucker, struck a match. Old Bill slapped it out of his hand.

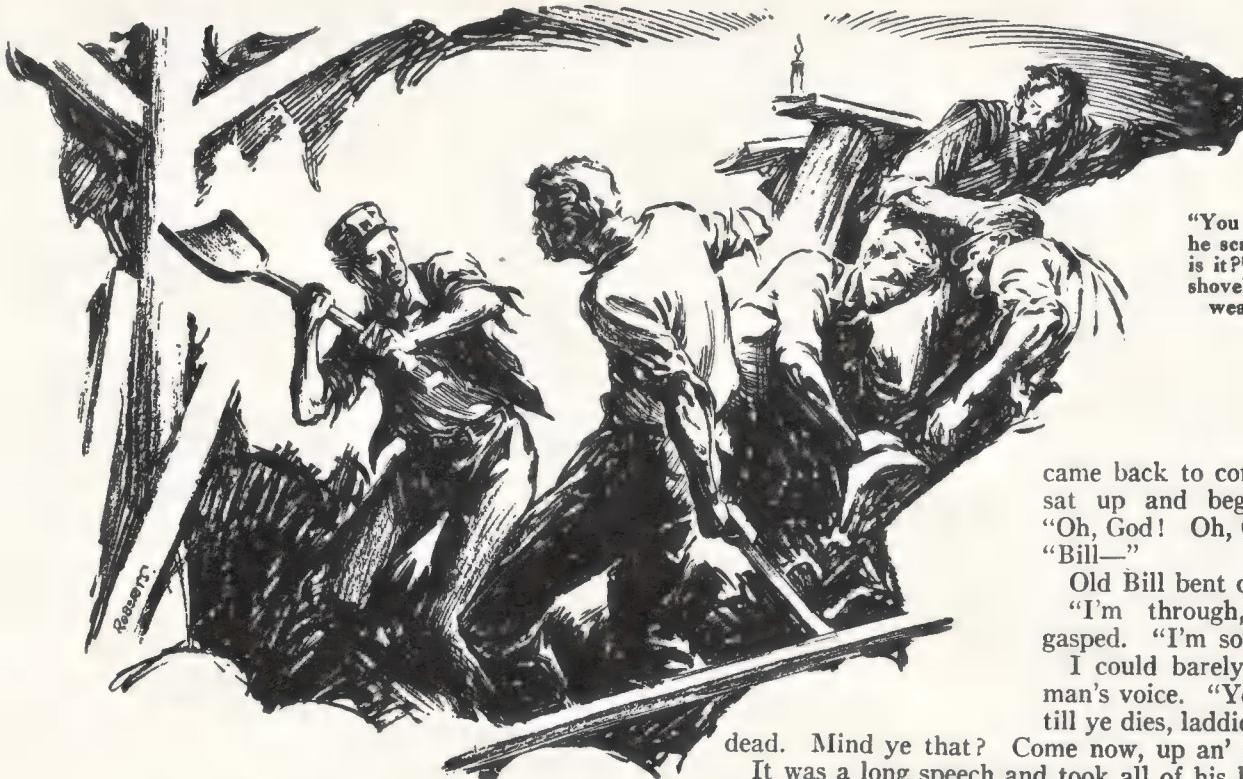
"None o' that, mind ye! Burnin' good air!"

Dawson swung back at him. They went down, fighting in the dark and the rest of us milled in a mad panic to get away from them. We smashed into the broken rock and cracked our heads on the timbers. It was like a cage of snarling animals.

ONCE more it was Bill's voice that brought us back to our senses. He was standing again, telling us what to do, begging us. But you can't plead with insane men. And we were almost that. The dark was bad enough; but then there was the noise.

That growl would come and go, like thunder, stop, then rumble overhead again as somewhere tons more of loose rock fell. We could only think it was coming down on us.

Old Bill could get us to do nothing in the dark. At last he lighted one candle and stuck it into a post. Then he picked up a shovel and started to dig.



"I'll tell ye now," he said. "Thur's a gob back thur. We'll dig to ut." By "gob" he meant a waste chute that would lead us from this level to another.

Sight of the tough old man bending at his shovel heartened us as much as what he said. He knew this mine as well as we knew our houses. Old Bill would get us out! Somehow that feeling spread. We started to dig.

I know now that Bill was simply keeping our courage up, keeping us alive—for there was no gob in that spot. He must have known it. But in working we forgot our danger, in a way, and kept ourselves from doing mad things. And too, the men from town would be digging in toward us. If we held on, we had a chance.

There was not enough room to swing a pick. We lugged rock with our bare hands, placing the chunks behind us. In the sick light of that one candle we were a gruesome lot. Shirts had been torn from bodies that bled in long slashes. We were caked with dirt.

We began to cough out our lungs from exertion in that dust-chamber, and soon old Bill said, "'Ere, work awhile, then take a blow."

But it was better to work than rest. He himself took no stops—old Bill, whose lungs were bad, and whose heart, the doctor had said, would not carry him through another ordinary month underground.

Perhaps he knew that we were looking to him. He was the shifter of this crew, the only experienced man. We had put our faith in his getting us out. He couldn't stop. Only his big-muscled arms heaving steadily at the rock pile kept us doing likewise.

Stevens, the boy, was the first to go out of his head. We were all strangling for water. You couldn't move your tongue after an hour in that dusty air. It went down your throat and dried in a lump. Stevens suddenly grabbed a shovel and turned on old Bill.

"You brought water!" he screamed. "Where is it?"

He swung the shovel, but he was too weak to do any harm. Old Bill turned the blow. Stevens reeled back and fell, striking his head on the rock. He lay still. The rest of us cursed him, because we stumbled over his legs.

Old Bill kept working at the rock pile. When Stevens

"You brought water," he screamed. "Where is it?" He swung the shovel, but he was too weak to do harm.

came back to consciousness he sat up and began to groan. "Oh, God! Oh, God!" Then: "Bill—"

Old Bill bent over him. "I'm through," Stevens gasped. "I'm sorry—"

I could barely hear the old man's voice. "Ye aint through till ye dies, laddie. An' ye aint dead. Mind ye that? Come now, up an' at ut!"

It was a long speech and took all of his breath. When he tried to pick up his shovel the weight of it toppled him over. When he got up, he came back to the rock wall, hanging onto the timbers for support. His strength was going. You could see the pulse pound in his throat. But the light of dogged will burned in his old eyes.

He stood there like that, watching over the rest of us who were still on our feet. We weren't doing much. Yet we were keeping ourselves up—old Bill was keeping us up. If it hadn't been for him we would have dropped, or battered ourselves to death in a frenzy of tearing at the slide. Times like that you need something steady to hang onto. It's like the need of religion when everything else has failed. As long as Bill Shaw stood there giving us orders, talking to us, we had faith that we were going to get out.

We began to move like machines with the power turned off. I forgot old Bill; perhaps it was for hours. Then I saw him again. He was still standing there, hanging onto a timber. But something else than sheer will-power had come into his eyes. He was listening.

Then we all heard it. A pick was striking into the slide. The town men were driving through!

I like to think of that last look upon old Bill's face. He was grinning, the same way he had grinned that morning when he had told his men: "Well, boys, 'ere's a blinkin' new shifter for ye. Good luck!" He was telling us that now—"good luck!"—swaying against the post, his lordly old head thrust forward. Then a great hand went up and across his eyes, his knees sagged and he went down slowly onto the rock.

Before long the town crew took us out through the coyote-hole they had made, leaving us below in the mine until we were again used to the fresher air. We had been trapped for six hours. Old Bill they put on a car and sent him up at once, for he was dead.

Those men who had been caught first? Their slide had uncovered an old waste chute for them; they had climbed up to the next level almost while we were going down.

Irony, yes; and yet—the company let the new shifter off, and Eddie was given the place. As for old Bill, he had gone out the way he wanted to go—boss of his shift underground.

Youth Rides Victorious

Ambush and hard riding and powder-smoke; love and hate and battle: a splendid romance of the old West.

By FREDERICK R. BECHDOLT

Illustrated by W. O. Kling

The Story So Far:

MEN called him Texas, though his name was Gregg Sargent. He was a tall, lean young man, seething with youth, ready to try anything. And so he had left the Pecos country and was riding through the Apache-infested mountains toward the wilder lands farther westward when it chanced that he overtook the ranchman Bill Savage bringing his wife and daughter to his new range in Arizona. And he helped Bill Savage fight off the attack of a Mexican gang disguised as Indians, and led by two American renegades, Haynor and "Kettle Belly," who were vengeful because Savage had discharged Haynor.

Texas and the girl Nan were much taken with one another. Perhaps it was because she resented her own feeling, perhaps because her mother warned her against wild young fellows like Gregg: but in the little hotel at the frontier town of Delight, Nan spoke sharply in reproof of a minor familiarity; and the young man promptly left her. So it came about that Gregg fell in with the "wild bunch" in town. And there he helped rescue Brazos, another young Texan, from the deputy sheriff—who proved to be none other than the crooked Haynor. Later, when Haynor and Kettle Belly sought to get the drop on Gregg in a gambling-room, the Texan was saved by the quick warning of a handsome dance-hall girl named Lou. . . .

With Brazos and two or three others of the wild bunch, Gregg planned a cattle-raiding foray into old Mexico. Bill Savage, too, had a trip below the line in mind, for he needed to buy cattle to stock his new ranch. Hearing of this through the rascally proprietor of the hotel, Pike Landusky, Haynor—who had been named as constable—and Kettle Belly plotted to waylay Savage, steal his money and cattle too, and attribute the crime to cattle-rustlers.
(The story continues in detail:)

GREGG missed Bill Savage, but Bill Savage did not miss him. It was the habit of the cattle-men, learned in wild years along the border, where necessity was sometimes extremely grim, to do the cautious thing. And furthermore on this occasion he had taken Nan with him. Ordinarily he would have made the journey for those silver dollars unencumbered by his wife or daughter; but since Nan had come to the home ranch something—he could not for the life of him understand what it might be—was troubling the girl. When she learned that he was about to depart for Delight, she had seemed to shake off her listlessness, and had begged so eagerly to go with him that he had not the heart to refuse. With her for company he had less desire than usual to encounter any danger that could be avoided. So, instead of driving

through the first day, he stopped over ten miles out that night at Pete Spence's ranch.

"Never do what the other fellow expects," he told Jack Flood, his foreman, who was riding along as bodyguard. "We'll hook up a span of hosses tomorrow mornin' an' go on in. Stage comes at noon. When we get back here, the mules will be fresh, an' we can shove on or lay over, accordin' to what comes up."

In the morning, when the two of them were standing by the corral, they caught sight of a dust-cloud down on the valley flats two or three miles away. Savage went to the buckboard and found his field-glasses on the seat. While he was studying the distant riders, Nan came up beside him.

"I'd know that sorrel ten miles away," he said, "an' the man that rides him."

If he had been a moment sooner in removing the binoculars, he would have caught his daughter's sudden change of expression. As it was, she was leaning forward with parted lips, and her eyes were eager when she took the glasses from his hand. There in the lead, beside another whom she had not seen before, Gregg rode. And she too would have known him at many times the distance.

With his hat slouched down on the back of his head, he swung in the saddle to the movements of the sorrel, and she could see—or maybe this was her fancy—the mass of brown hair above his brow stirring in the morning breeze. Gregg, riding southward! And who were those others with him?

"Give Jack the glasses, honey," she heard her father's voice, and she complied. The foreman looked for some moments; then he spoke:

"Rustlers. One of them two in the lead is Brazos. He's short in Chir'cahua for a killin'. Better keep yo'r eyes open fer 'em when yo're down across the line, Bill. Some greaser's herds is goin' to suffer soon."

"Brazos!" the cattleman muttered. "Thought so. That feller with him is the man I fetched from Stein's." He turned to Nan, and his voice took on an anxious note:

"What's ailin' yo', honey?"

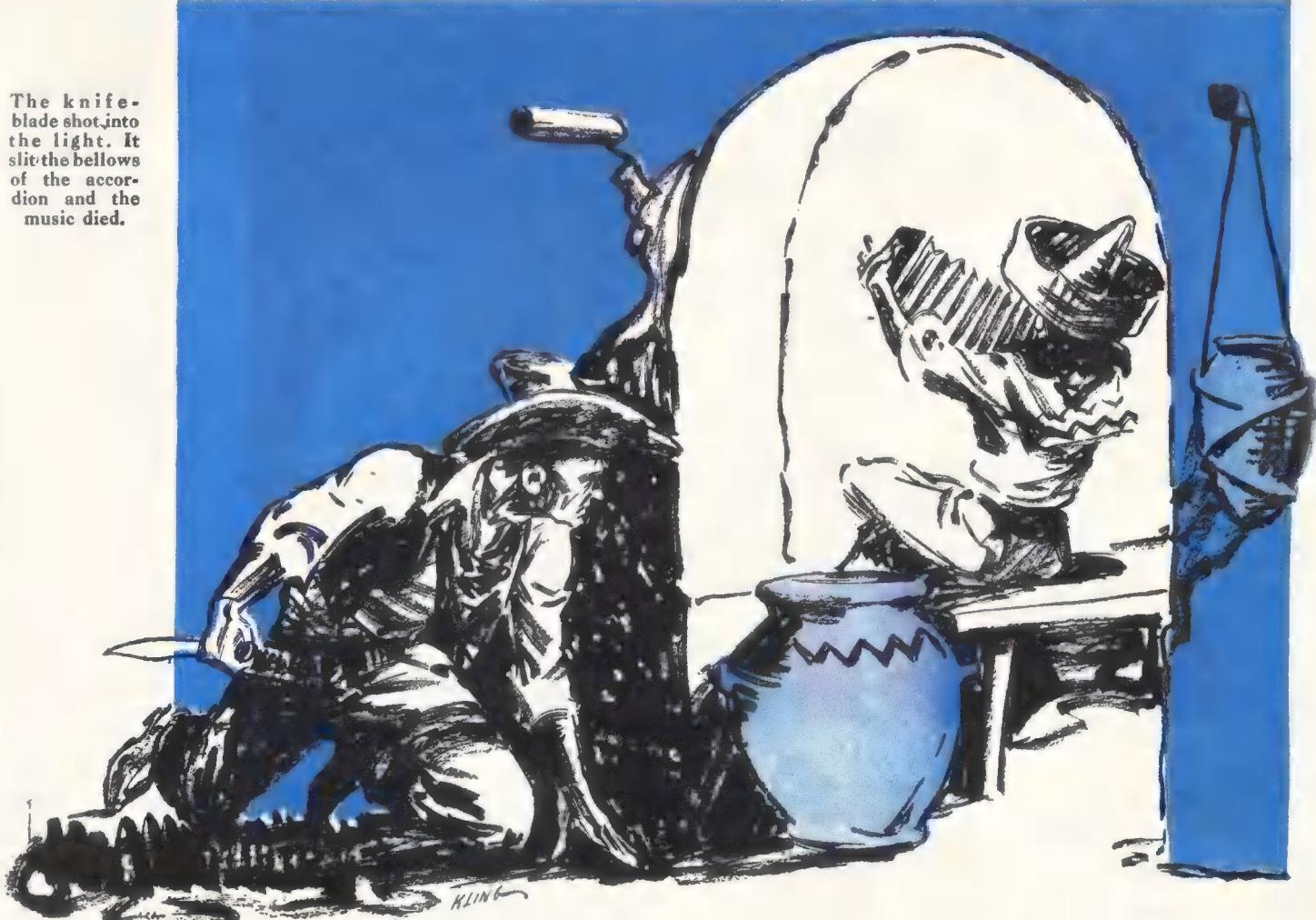
She shook her head. "Nothing."

But when they had hitched the borrowed span of bronchos and were driving on to Delight with Jack Flood well ahead, she voiced her thoughts a little more freely:

"You don't think he's a cow-thief, Father?"

"Who? Gregg?" Her father was silent for a moment. "Well, I don't reckon he is—not on this side of the line. That is, not yet. Down in Mexico it's looked at different.

The knife-blade shot into the light. It slit the bellows of the accordion and the music died.



The's a heap of good men has gone wrong thet-a-way.
An' he's ridin' with a wild bunch."

He flicked the bronchos with the whiplash, and for some moments thereafter he had his hands full with them, for the road was rough and they were but newly broken. When he had them well in hand again:

"I sure wish he had stuck with me." He was gazing straight ahead, hardly conscious of the girl beside him. "I would admire to have him ridin' with me when I go after that herd."

Nan said nothing. She was thinking how she had been wishing that same thing herself so many times since she had come to the home ranch—and how she had been the cause for this separation. She could see Gregg's face ■ it had been when he looked into her eyes that afternoon in the little ladies' parlor at Pike Landusky's hotel: the sudden change that had come into it, the surprise, the pained look as if she had struck him, and then the head had gone back and the eyes had grown like gray ice and—

"Tell Mr. Savage he knows where he can find me." She could hear him now, as she had heard him then.

She had driven him away, and this morning he was riding beside a wanted man—riding southward on some wild errand. Then she pressed her lips tightly together. What business had she to be worrying about him, or what might come to him of good or ill? So she had striven more than once before, summoning her pride to aid her, but always failed—just as she failed now. She could have wept if only she had been alone.

Savage was speaking:

"Funny thing!" He shook his head. "He never come after that money I owed him."

She hesitated for some time before she asked a question that was in her mind. At last:

"Those men that he was riding with—do you think there's any danger—any chance of your running across them down there?"

He laughed.

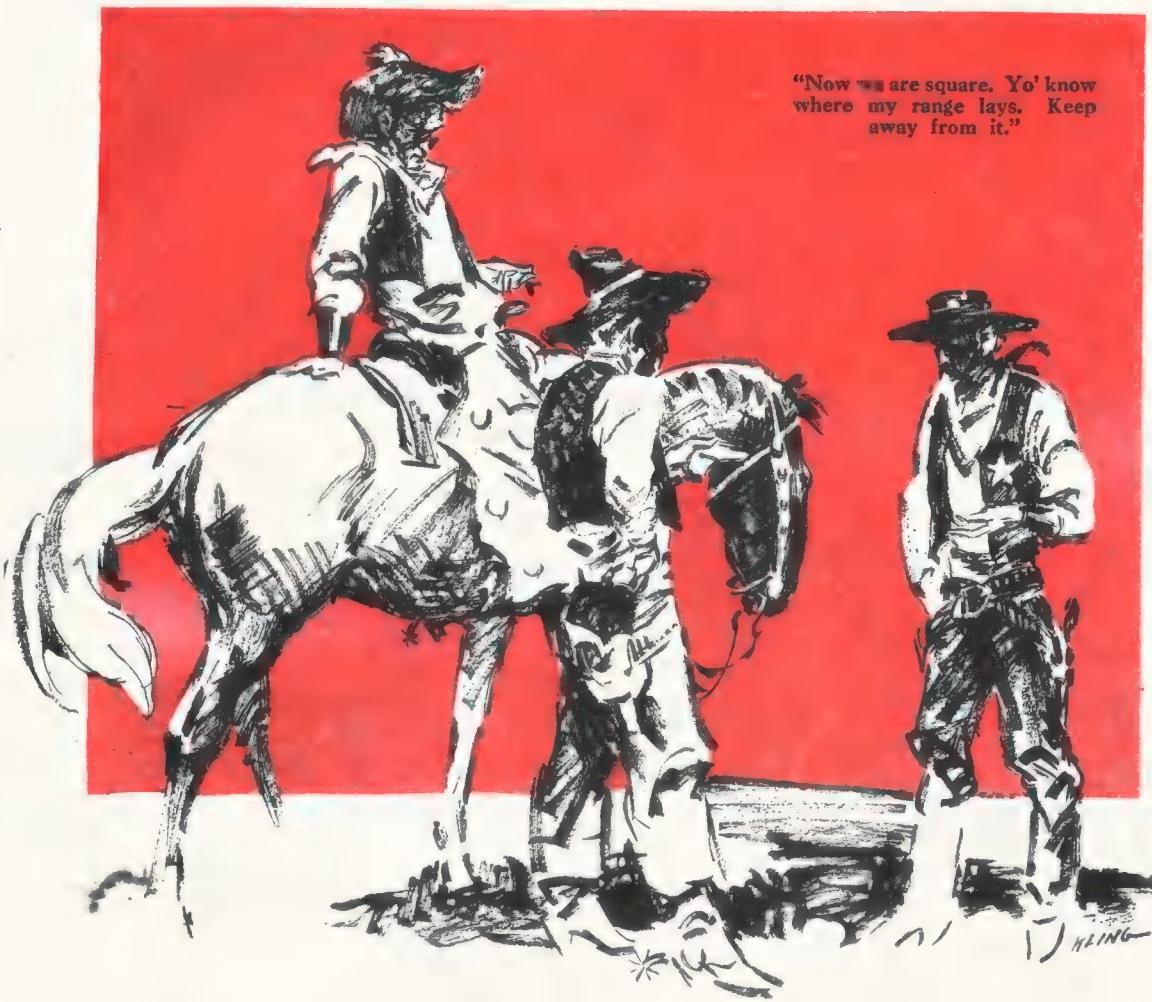
"No. They won't bother me. The chances are they aint up to highway robbery." And some moments later he added: "Not yet."

She bit her lip and wished he had not said those last two words. And so they drove on, and it was nearly noon when they reached Delight.

"**S**TAGE is on time," Bill Savage said, and pointed down the Tucson road, where a gray cloud of dust was marching along the flanks of the pale hills across the river some miles away. When they pulled up by Rinehart's store, which was also the Wells-Fargo office, several of the inhabitants were already gathered under the wooden awning in front of the adobe building, and others were coming to witness the day's main event. The bearded justice of the peace stepped out to greet them, and Nan was listening indifferently while her father and the foreman talked with him of the latest ore-strike up in the hills, the most likely whereabouts of Geronimo's warriors, and of the candidates for the coming fall election. Now and again ■ newcomer added himself to the group beneath the wooden awning. The girl's eyes wandered to the entrance of Jack Ryan's saloon across the street:

A woman was standing in the doorway.

Excepting for her mother, this was the first of her sex whom Nan had seen since she had come into the San



Pedro Valley. And this girl was young. Young, and she owned a vivid beauty. Her hair was like a mass of spun copper glowing dully in the shadow of the flat-roofed building. Her whole form seemed radiant with life and the joy of living. In that moment when Nan's eyes fell on her, she raised her face; their eyes met. Involuntarily both of them smiled.

Then the girl in the buckboard remembered. In her world there were two sorts of women. Between them there was no communion by word or by look. And the sort who stood in the doorways of saloons and gambling-houses was not her own. Her smile vanished as suddenly as it had come. She looked away, and hardness came like a shadow over the face within the doorway. The mass of copper hair went back, and the small chin tilted upward.

Nan sat there gazing at the beaten earth beside the buckboard's front wheel, still seeing that face, still wistful from the promise which it had held out to her; the promise of the youth and the quick vivid beauty. Her father's voice interrupted her thoughts. There was something in the tone which made her glance around at him.

"I want to have a word with that fellow." She saw Haynor coming down the roadway from the hotel. Rinehart stepped aside; Jack Flood's eyes were on the cattleman and he too edged away. Bill Savage got down from the buckboard and stood waiting; there had come over him that presence which Nan had seen before; there was no change of attitude; but it was upon him, making him appear much larger than he was.

A nickel-plated star was pinned to Haynor's flannel shirt; it glittered in the sunlight. His face seemed unhealthy in its pale contrast to his dead black hair. His dull opaque eyes were fixed on the cattleman's.

her father say to Jack Flood: "If I could only make dead sure of what I think is true, I'd kill him on sight."

Soon after that the rattle of hoofs and the noise of wheels proclaimed the arrival of the stage. The spasm of activity was brief: the bringing of fresh horses from the corrals, the change, the dumping of the mail-sacks and Wells-Fargo packages; then the clumsy vehicle rattled off up the road in a cloud of dust. Bill Savage and his foreman brought several canvas sacks of silver dollars from the store and bestowed them in the buckboard's rear. The bystanders had by this time melted away and old Rinehart came to say a final word. He nodded after the receding form of Delight's new constable, and when he spoke it was without allusion to the little scene which he had witnessed a few moments since.

"Likes to organize his play, an' he aint so blame particular to make his killin's nice. Las' night he tried it in Jack Ryan's place."

Nan was paying but little heed to this; she had heard such talk many a time before, and it always brought to her a feeling of physical aversion. But suddenly she stiffened and became intent.

"He was lookin' to kill that Texas fellow that come with yo' from Stein's Pass," the justice of the peace was saying. "An' he'd have got him from behind, if—" He told the story in detail, meticulously:

"Texas, he was sittin' on my right—the door behind him—this Kettle Belly standin' to the right of Texas—an' Lou on lookout facin' the entrance. If it hadn't been fer her—yes sir, she done saved Texas—"

Being thus engrossed, none of the three men noticed Nan sitting rigid and white-faced, staring straight before her with widened eyes.

"Howdy," said he, and strove to make his manner casual. Savage gave no reply to the salutation, but:

"Here's yo'r wages." His hand came forth from his pocket holding two twenty-dollar gold-pieces; and when the other had taken them:

"Now we are square." The cattleman's voice was tight and very quiet. "Yo' know where my range lays?"

"I do. What about it?" Haynor's tone was truculent.

"All right. Keep away from it."

They stood facing each other for some moments. Finally the opaque eyes shifted, and their owner swaggered away. The members of the group on the veranda drew aside to let him pass, and none spoke as he went by. Nan heard

"An' that," Rinehart concluded, "was her yo' seen in Jack Ryan's door before the stage come up."

With this strong meat for her thoughts to feed upon, Nan departed from Delight. Now and again her father said a word to her, but what she answered, she did not know. Once, however, when they were changing the team at Pete Spence's ranch, Bill Savage made a remark to his foreman that smote her like a blow full in the face.

"Good man a-goin' wrong, that boy. Now he will be wanted by the sheriff worse than before; and next thing we know, I reckon, he'll be outlawed for a killin'!"

That was bad enough; but even this faded from her mind before the narrative that she had heard as it fell from the lips of the justice of the peace. And during all that long journey back to the home ranch, she kept seeing, over and over again, the girl's face that had smiled upon her from the doorway of Jack Ryan's Eldorado. And when she saw it, she would say to herself:

"She saved his life."

Sometimes she would try to give herself a little comfort, and she would think:

"That doesn't mean he cares a thing for her, or she for him."

But she could not make herself believe it. . . .

That afternoon while the buckboard was rattling on southward up the long valley flats, while the mountains changed colors from gray to old rose, and from old rose to mauve and purple in the distance, Haynor and Pike Landusky were arguing in the barroom of Delight's hotel.

"We could of rode out an' got ahead an' ambushed him," the former growled.

"An' even if yo' got away with it, yo'd be leavin' the country with a posse after yo'," the other countered. "No sir. He's organized for trouble now, but I have got word when he is to meet up with those greaser cattle, an' the place. There is plenty of time for us to make ready. When yo' ride down there, the news goes out that yo're traveling down to Mexico to save Bill Savage from Brazos and them rustlers. An' when yo' come back, yo'll tell how yo' was too late."

CHAPTER XII

SIX of them riding southward through the long fervid summer days: lean and young and sun-browned, ready for anything that might turn up, and riding light—light as to supplies and still lighter as to certain rules of conduct which are printed on the statute-books of all nations. For, according to their way of looking at it,—which was the manner of most men in the border country,—the rights of property ceased to hinder them when they had passed the line. They were, as the old saying put it: "On the wolf."

Ideas of morality had troubled them little during their brief years of manhood; they had abided by rough codes which had originated within themselves; and because they were all clean of heart, their actions had been clean. But otherwise they were like the gray wolves—a predatory band, untamed.

Gaunt rock-walled mountains and long, glaring flats. They traveled onward: Gregg and Brazos and the shock-haired Bill, who went among his fellows unhampered by a surname; the Glannon brothers, Ed and Jim; and Zwing Brown, whose cheeks were downy though he had burned powder in two cattle wars. And when they had come as far as Fronteras, they ran across two companies of ragged soldiers who were out looking for bandits. Whereupon they became, for the time being, discreet, and took to the hills, for they were not the first gringos who

had come into the country on such an errand, and they cherished no anxiety to wind up their adventure with an adobe wall behind them and a firing-squad before—as some of their predecessors had.

UP here among the wide-spread oaks it was not bad; the feed for the horses was plentiful, and there was a big spring of cold water. The only lack was provisions. Hunting being inadvisable with the presence of the military, the six adventurers dug down into the pockets of their jean breeches and managed to gather together something over twenty dollars, which was turned over to Brazos and Gregg, who were to gain such information as they could concerning the herds of longhorns while they were purchasing supplies.

Their destination was one of those little hamlets which the Mexicans call haciendas, some thirty miles or so from the camp, but the luck which looks out for such affairs saw to it that, late in the afternoon when they were coming down out of the mountains to the plain, they overtook a swarthy rider driving a pack-mule whose *aparejos* were loaded down with plaster images. Like most of his countrymen, he was both courteous and fond of gossip, and when he had found that this sunburned pair of gringos did not intend to use their big-handled revolvers to despoil him, he gladly explained the nature of his freight.

"I have here," he told them, "the Holy Family and all the members of the Celestial Court, and I go to Fronteras. For this is a feast day, and in the evening there will be many in the plaza; they will be playing the monte bank and fighting the cocks, and most of those who have the good luck will purchase from my stock."

Riding onward when they had passed him, the two gringos were silent for a good half-hour, and when they spoke, it was evident that both of them had been busy with the same speculations.

"I always was lucky at monte," Gregg said. And Brazos' dark eyes had lost some of their sullenness.

"Never saw one of those rooster-fights yet," he murmured.

So, of course, they decided that there was no reason why they should not take in the town.

"Providin'," young Brazos specified, "we don't make ourselves too numerous. We cain't affo'd to run into trouble with them soldiers pesterin' round the country."

Wherefore they drank none of the fiery mescal and tequila which was on sale in a dozen little booths, and went to their fate with cool heads.

The plaza was like all plazas on the evening of a feast-day: serape-draped men; women with their faces half hidden by the black mantillas; all manner of peddlers and dogs and beggars; games of chance, and a little tent-show where jugglers and acrobats and a wheezy band displayed their talents to the light of oil torches. The cock-fighting was going on in a narrow alcove off the open square between two blank adobe walls. The pair of adventurers lingered during three brief mains. And when the third fowl had collapsed into a small limp heap of feathers in the dust—

"I'm licked," Brazos whispered. "Never did lose money that fast before. Let's pull our freight."

"I can win it back in monte inside of half an hour," Gregg asserted. His companion pondered briefly.

"Well, anyhow," he muttered, "what we got left won't buy the grub the boys need. May's well starve as go lean."

The monte dealers had small three-legged tables on the edge of the sandy square, and every one of them was surrounded by its group of swarthy players. Gregg picked the one which seemed to him most promising. As to the time, his prophecy had been correct; it took less than ■

half-hour; but when they left the place, their pockets were empty. He was lamenting his ill fortune when Brazos interrupted him:

"No need to cuss yo'r luck. I was watchin' the dealer. He belongs with them jugglers in the circus, that feller." His eyes had grown somber, but as he was speaking, little devilish lights began to dance upon their surface. He gripped Gregg's elbow. "Tell yo' what—"

He told it in a whisper, and when he had finished:

"Not a soldier in sight around the place. An' we can sneak out of town before the word goes round."

There was in the plan an element of poetic justice that appealed to Gregg, and moreover these were Mexicans. Mexicans, he considered, did not count.

The little group of players were busy around the three-legged table, and all heads were bent toward the common center when the voice of Brazos descended upon them from behind. The dealer was the only other who spoke.

"*Por Dios!*" he said, and that was all. Like the rest, he held his hands aloft. And so they stood with the muzzle of Brazos' revolver peering at them like a baleful eye, while Gregg stepped up to the table and raked the coins into his hat. The wavering light of the torches was poor, and there was little time for looking, but the money had a satisfactory feeling—when it came to weight. . . .

He and Brazos had slipped away, and had mounted and ridden forth from the town; they were a good five miles on their road to the hacienda when they stopped to examine their loot. It was one of those moments when words are inadequate.

"Never knew copper centavos was so heavy," was all Gregg found to say. Brazos had been thinking more to the point.

"Smart fellow, that dealer. He done hid what he won from yo' while we was figuring on the hold-up. Well, we got enough to pay our way overnight."

Which was all the solace they needed; and they rode on to the hamlet of flat-roofed adobes feeling that the worst had happened, and after this things were bound to improve. In which, they were erring sadly.

UPON nearing the hamlet, they were met by sounds of music on the night breeze.

"Accordion," Gregg said. "That means a *baile*. Dan-cin' an' girls."

And by the time they rode into the place, they had forgotten all else save the prospect of a pleasant ending for the evening.

Los Alamositos was the name of the hacienda, because of some cottonwoods which had once been small near by. Now they were full grown, and the rustling of their leaves was pleasant in the darkness. The place was like a hundred others on both sides of the line: a half-dozen cube-shaped adobe buildings surrounding a square of beaten earth where, in times of harvest, men threshed the grain with flails, and in times of celebration men and women, old and young, danced through the hours of darkness until the dawn came red upon the sky. So now they were enjoying themselves, a round score of them.

"For once in our lives," Brazos proposed when they had unsaddled and left their horses in the corral, "le's me an' yo' look out for business first an' pleasure afterward."

Following this sound idea, they paid for their night's lodging in one of the mud-walled buildings, after which they put in a good half-hour learning what they could concerning the herd which was already beginning to assemble on the plain not far away. This being done, they plunged into the dance with clear consciences.

Poor folk, for the most part, farmer people and laborers;

more Indian than Spanish; and the señoritas were few, for in those parts when a girl passed into womanhood, she usually went into wedlock. The music came from one lonely accordion, and the youth who played it lounged in a corner of the little plaza leaning against the building wall, lank-haired and dark and graceful as some wild animal.

But any kind of amusement goes a long way when one has been spending his time in the saddle, and there was one slender slip of a girl who glided through the figures as sinuously as a slim brown tigress; and when Brazos stepped before her and asked her for a dance, she looked up into his face with eyes as soft as black velvet. When he had picked her for his partner the third time, he noticed the youth with the accordion watching him; and he saw the little flecks of red light dancing in the eyes of this one. Whereupon he smiled to himself and chose the little señorita twice again in succession.

NOw and again a rider came or went; and for this reason Gregg and Brazos took no note of departing or arriving hoof-beats. Nor did they notice the clink of accouterments which accompanied one of these arrivals. But they had ridden far that day themselves, and on the morrow they must ride again. So, sometime near midnight, they went to their quarters in the flat-roofed adobe house beside the square of beaten earth. And there the weariness that demanded sleep remained unsatisfied; for the dance continued, and what was more, they knew it would continue until sunrise. Brazos swore.

"These fleas in here," he said, "are bad enough. But I could forget them if it wasn't for that accordion."

They tossed in their blankets for another half-hour, and then the luck which had been dogging them all that day saw to it that Gregg was seized by a satanic inspiration. His companion heard him slipping from his blankets.

"What yo' going to do?" he demanded.

"Stick here an' wait," Gregg bade him, and went on out.

The shadows were dark about the corner where the youth was lounging with the accordion. Only the one little pool of light here with the hapless musician in its center. So none saw the cowboy creeping toward the spot; nor was there any glitter on the blade of the knife which he held in his hand. The music was coming to a high note, and the dancers were whirling sedately in one of those long waltzes of the southland, when the knife-blade shot into the light. It slit the bellows of the accordion. There was a ripping sound. The music faded into an asthmatic wheeze; then it died. And Gregg crept back into the adobe house.

After which the pair went to sleep. . . .

It was perhaps a half an hour later when Gregg awoke with a start. And at first he was conscious of only one sound which came from his companion. He was reflecting on the sonorousness of that snoring when he became aware of voices just outside the open door.

"*Los soldados.*"

He stiffened at the words. Soldiers meant trouble. But while he listened, the voices sank to a muttering, and when they again became audible, they were speaking of something else.

"Well, then," one was saying, "what is it you would tell me, my friend?" And the other answered softly, so that Gregg had to lean forward to hear. The movement brought him where he could see the two of them in a little lake of moonlight by the door.

"The herd is gathered, and in the morning I ride to meet the gringo drover." He recognized the speaker; it was the youth who had been playing the accordion. "He brings the money for those cattle—thousands of pesos."

"And he brings men with him, and rifles," the other interrupted. "I carry a bullet from one of those gringo rifles now."

"If I should tell you of a spot where I will lead them for their camp? And you could wait with your band for them—and get them while they sleep?"

"I do not know. Who is this drover? And how many ride with him?"

"As to the riders, how can I tell you? The drover—Savage is his name."

An exclamation from the other halted him. It was more of a hissing breath than an utterance. And then:

"Well, then, as to the place?" the dark man asked.

"Fifty miles north of this spot, the cañon where the two mountain ranges meet. You know the spring that comes from the rock. You will find them in camp there."

"Bueno," the dark man answered quietly.

"And now," the young accordion-player told him, "it would be well for you to go, for I am waiting for the soldiers."

"The soldiers! And why?"

"These two who sleep in there like pigs. It is for them they come; and after they have taken them, they ride into the hills, where the other gringos are waiting to capture them as well. Hark!"

Gregg heard the sound of hoof-beats on the Fronteras road. The pair before the doorway slipped away beyond the shelter of the building wall.

When he had seized Brazos by the shoulder and shaken him to wakefulness, the rattle of hoofs was in the little plaza. Voices were calling all around the square.

"This way," one said.

There was a rush toward the door; then Gregg heard his companion utter a single oath. And while he was wondering what new ill luck had come to bring that dismay into the other's voice, he got his answer. For his fingers touched an empty holster. They were unarmed.

Of the climax that followed he had a vague recollection: A dozen soldiers jostling one another in the entrance.

Then he was upon his feet, Brazos beside him. He felt a blow, and that was the last thing of which he was conscious.

CHAPTER XIII

ONE of the first things which Gregg realized when he came back to his surroundings was the stickiness of drying blood upon his face; and another was the terrific aching of his head. When he tried to raise his hands to feel the gash above his brows, he found his wrists were tied with rawhide. And then he remembered the last thing that he had seen: a musket-butt outlined against the moonlight in the doorway, descending upon him.

Black dark in here. But the moon was still shining outside. There was an open trap in the low roof, and the pale radiance flowed down through it, settling in a small

silver puddle on the earthen floor. Some one was playing an accordion, and feet were scraping in the courtyard.

"I thought I'd put that out of business," he said aloud.

"Fetched a new one, I reckon." It was the voice of Brazos close beside him, and it brought him a little comfort. "How yo' feelin'?"

"I have felt livelier," Gregg told him faintly. "How long was I out?"

"Two hours or so, I reckon. If we should happen to get shut of this,—which it aint likely,—I will be used to being hog-tied."

"What do they aim to do with us?"

"Comes sunup, an' we're here,—as I reckon we will be,—their intentions are to line us up by one of these adobes an' shoot us," Brazos replied.

They were silent for some time, and Gregg found himself thinking of Bill Savage.

Nan's face came before him. She would be waiting up there at the ranch-house for her father, and he—

Brazos was swearing quietly, and his voice was vibrant with feeling.

"That little devil of a girl that I was dancin' with," said he, "—she was the one that got our guns. I saw her slip into the room once. And when they tied us up, she was there in the doorway talking to the soldiers."

Gregg groaned.

"Yo'r head bad?" the other asked.

"I was just thinking what a fool a fellow can be."

"Make it two fellows while

you're at it. I aint showed up so wise tonight, myself."

A head appeared in the doorway, and a voice broke in upon them.

"Quiet, you two."

Brazos made answer calmly.

"You go to hell," and then he added by way of after-thought: "Yo' can't shoot us till sunup, pardner. It would spoil the fun for the others."

"Two of 'em out there on guard," he whispered, "and the rest are dancing with the women in the plaza."

Gregg tried to move his legs and found them bound. His thoughts returned to Savage, and he recalled the words that he had heard beyond the threshold a little while ago. There came to him a feeling of fierce rebellion against fate. It was not that he must die—not so much that, as it was that by his death Savage would remain unwarned, that he must stand before a firing-squad and go down with the knowledge of the plot which he had heard, with the picture of the ambush in his mind and of the cattleman walking into it, and of the two women waiting at the ranch-house—waiting until the long days stretched into weeks, and the last shred of hope vanished. It seemed as if fate had played him an ugly trick. A voice outside the doorway halted his thoughts.

"The sky grows white in the east. Less than an hour, and we will be in the saddle."

And the other sentry answered, with a yawn:

"The sun cannot rise too soon for me, my friend."

Most of the dancers had gone to their rest. The man



with the accordion was playing a lilting air, and some one was singing one of those long ballads of love and drink and fighting which soldiers have sung the world over since time began.

"I was thinkin' of the boys," Brazos said, "and us two—" He swore again. "Rooster-fights and monte and the girls!"

Another half-hour dragged by.

SAVAGE and his wife and Nan—and four sunburned young fellows up in the hills. It occurred to Gregg that what he had done tonight was in keeping with the things that he had done in the last two years of his wanderings. He had always gone ahead so blithely, just blundering from one situation to another without regard for what might come of it. It was not remorse that took hold of him now; it was a feeling of self-disgust, as if he had been given a sum of money and had wasted it away when he might have used it wisely.

Not long to sunrise now. And then—

"Rooster-fights and monte and the girls!" That was all he had got out of the whole thing, when he came to look back upon it.

The little puddle of moonlight had shifted close to him; it lay almost beneath the trap in the roof; and it was growing faint now. The room was beginning to reveal itself about him. Not long to wait. . . .

Something thudded on the hard earth beside his elbows; it lay there gleaming, and he stared at it. And then his bound hands went forth, and the fingers closed upon the bone handle of a sheath-knife. All the world had changed for him in an instant. He was done with thinking of his shortcomings. Life had appeared again before him!

The trap was empty when he glanced upward. It was as if the knife had descended from the brightening sky. And now as he was gripping the handle in his tethered hands, the accordion ceased playing; the singer had stopped his ballad.

Brazos was on his knees beside him holding forth his hands in an attitude that might have been taken for supplication. And neither of them spoke. Gregg held the knife against the rawhide bonds about the other's wrists. A faint ripping sound came to his ears, and he saw the arms go wide.

A voice beside the doorway froze them to immobility. One of the sentries was looking in upon them. He laughed and turned away.

"The gringos," he told his companion, "make their peace with God."

"Now," Brazos whispered, and took the knife. Gregg felt his own bonds relax.

Then he was conscious of a sound above his head, a hissing sound; it was so low that it barely reached his ears. He saw Brazos leaping to his feet. An arm appeared in the open trap, outlined against the sky—a slender arm, and something was in the hand. Brazos was reaching toward it. A whisper floated downward. Gregg heard two words:

"*Los alamos.*" And then Brazos was giving him his revolver.

"*Los alamos,*" he thought. "The grove of cottonwoods!"

A clatter of musket-butts out there in the courtyard. The soldiers were making ready. A voice of command. That would be an officer. And Brazos was breathing into his ear.

"Take the right side of the door."

They stole on tiptoe through the shadows, but the sound of their footfalls must have reached the sentries, for when Gregg was gliding along the wall toward the threshold, one of the guards looked into the room.

"I do not see them," he was saying. His voice died away on the last word, and he stood there mute and motionless, facing the muzzles of the big revolvers. Brazos was speaking in an undertone:

"Inside, the two of you, and quick!" And when they had obeyed, the shuffle of feet came from the courtyard behind the building.

"Which way?" Gregg asked, and then he remembered the words which had floated down through the open trap:

"*Los alamos—the cottonwoods.*"

The firing-squad was still out of sight beyond the corner of the building when the two came forth into the open. Their limbs were stiff; they stumbled as they ran. The little grove of cottonwoods showed dark against the flushing sky less than a hundred yards ahead of them.

They heard a cry back there, and after that the noise of voices.

"Duck!" Brazos called. "They've sighted us."

They raced, bent double, zigzagging as they went. A musket cracked. A volley followed. Then they were in the shadow of the trees.

"This way!" It was a woman speaking.

Here in a narrow alley where the light came down between the boughs, she stood holding the two saddled horses, and as he seized the reins, Gregg saw her face. It was the girl with whom Brazos had danced—their betrayer.

"You!" he cried. He saw her teeth flash as she smiled up at him.

"I did not like to think of it—"

So much he caught, and then he was in the saddle, and the horse was running free. And the voice of Brazos was in his ears:

"Head for the hills."

Two hours later, when the last sounds of pursuit had long since died away and they knew that they were safe, they rested their horses and compared views on the subject of women's ways. It was Brazos who offered the best solution for the phenomenon which they had so recently witnessed.

"Only thing she done," said he, "was change her mind. Which, she was jest like all women."

Thereafter Gregg rode on in silence. For another problem, and one more serious, had come before him to be settled. At length he spoke:

"Think yo' can make it to the boys alone?"

Brazos turned to look at him, and concern was in his face. "Cain't stand the goin'?" he asked.

"It aint that." Gregg shook his head. "I've got to quit yo'!"

He saw the dark eyes regarding him with a puzzled expression, and he recounted the conversation to which he had listened before the door. When he had done—

"Pears like Savage is out of luck." Brazos shrugged his shoulders.

"I throwed in with him once," Gregg went on, "an' I like him."

The other nodded then.

"Cain't go back on a friend," he said unconcernedly; "and I cain't go back on the boys. We got to split." They looked into each other's eyes, and smiled.

"So long," one said; the other answered: "*Adios.*"

And Gregg struck off northward.

CHAPTER XIV

THREE days Bill Savage lingered at the home ranch; and when the fourth day was still young, he was preparing to set forth into the wild land south of the bound-



His fingers touched an empty holster. He felt a blow. . . . The last thing of which he was conscious.

ary with four riders, and two pack-mules laden down with the huge Mexican dollars. The sky had not yet begun to whiten in the east when he said good-by to his wife and daughter.

The long one-story ranch-house stood on the mesa's edge, flanked by scattered outbuildings; lights glowed from the windows; a lantern zigzagged in the corral where Jack Flood was overseeing the throwing of the diamond hitches. A silent man, Jack Flood, like his employer, and wise in the ways of the borderland where riders of three races, red men and Mexicans and sunburned wanderers from the States, were continually slipping back and forth in raid or flight.

"Me, I would like it better," he was telling himself, "if Bill had took one white man with him. But it cain't be helped."

In the dining-room of the ranch-house Mrs. Savage was voicing the same thought to her husband. He finished his last cup of coffee and rose beside her; and when he saw the lines of worry on her face in the yellow lamplight, he laid his arm about her shoulder.

"Don't fret, sweet." His voice was taking on a note that none had ever heard save the two women of his household; for he was one of those whose love ran deep. "Aint a man in the country got more nerve than ol' Santa Cruz, an' he's picked the three best vaqueros he could find."

"If only Curt Wilcox hadn't got laid up!" She sighed. He caressed her hair with his big clumsy fingers.

"Hard luck, he had to let that hoss roll on him. But he can help Jack hold the place down; an' I cain't leave yo' an' Nan without one able-bodied cowboy." He bent and kissed her. "Where is Nan anyhow?"

"Last I saw her," his wife told him, "she was on her way to the corral."

The cattleman shook his head.

"Dunno what's got into her. Been worse'n ever since we got back from Delight. Half the time she's moonin' by herself, an' the other half she's been pesterin' me to leave her go along with me."

"A girl gets lonesome in this country, Bill." Mrs. Savage sighed. "A woman too, sometimes." He raised her to her feet and drew her close, and so they stood, like two young lovers, saying nothing while their hearts were torn with the pain of the coming parting.

And Nan, whose heart was aching too with pain which she would have fought away were she but able, was talking to Santa Cruz, in the light of the lantern which the old vaquero carried down in the corral. And because the ways of love are secretive, she was making herself smile upon him while she wheedled from him the information which she was seeking. Just why she sought it, she did not know; there was no immediate purpose in her mind; the desire was born of a longing which she kept hidden in her breast—of this, and of a fear which had come to her since that day when she had returned with her father from Delight: a fear for the young fellow whom she had driven away, who was now riding down there south of the line. What was to come to him down there? And to her father? The dread had grown within her that some crisis was to face them. And perhaps because it was born of instinct and nothing more, it had taken a deep hold of her.

So she was talking, sometimes in her own tongue, sometimes in broken Spanish, with the grizzled man whose long white mustache stood out in vivid contrast to his swarthy face, all seamed with lines of wisdom and hard experience; and he was answering her, for the most part in English.

"The road, señorita?" he was repeating her question, "For why do you ask it? And if I tell you, you must promise me to say nothing to others. For it is a secret, you understand. Well, then, you see that bright star down there, and where the two sharp-pointed mountains cut the sky beneath it? That is the line by which we hold. For one day's journey. And there, under those two peaks, by a spring where an arroyo comes down from the cliffs into a cañon, we will camp tonight; and tomorrow we meet the man who is to take us to the cattle. So now you know." He shook his head, and he smiled a little wistfully as the old smile at the young: "One would think, señorita, that it was your lover who was riding out this morning—"

He turned his head to answer Jack Flood's summons at that moment, and missed the look on her face.

"So yo'd rather be here with the men than with your dad." It was the cattle-man's voice at her elbow. He slipped his arm about her waist, and she nestled closer to him.

"No chance to go with you, Father?"

"Not a chance. Stay here an' help take care of yo'r mother." He looked down into her face, smiling as he never did at men. Then he went on to oversee the final details of the packing, and she heard him saying to Jack Flood:

"You an' Curt will take that end room in the house while I'm gone. An' stick close to the place. I saw a signal-smoke up in the Chiricahuas yesterday."

Then her mother came, and the two women stood with their arms about each other, watching the cavalcade file off into the shadows until it vanished in the south. Now and again a sound came faintly from the darkness where it had disappeared—the rattle of a stone, the jingle of harness as an animal shook itself; and finally, when they had stood for a long time listening, they realized that the silence had closed in as completely as the night between them and the riders. Their arms tightened about each other, and they walked back to the house.

Dawn came; the hot white sunlight bathed the long *malpais* flats, and the distant mountains below the line began the slow changes of color which were to go on throughout the day. The two cowboys moved their belongings into the end room, where Curt Wilcox remained propped up in bed with a pair of broken ribs for company and half a dozen twice-read dime novels to help him forget the slow monotony of the long hours. Jack Flood went about the small business of the corrals, and the two women tried their best, each not to let the other see her gazing down across the savage landscape into the south. And when one of them would find herself discovered thus, she would smile bravely as she could into the other's eyes, saying no word.

MORNING, fervid noon tide, and the dreariness of the hot afternoon—until at last the evening came, and they could say that the first day had been put behind them. By dark the two cowboys were sound asleep, and Nan was bidding her mother good night.

"Better go to bed yourself, dear," Mrs. Savage said when they had kissed each other. The weariness of the long day soon overcame her loneliness—she fell asleep. But the girl remained sitting on the front veranda, looking off into the south. The mountains showed dead black in the moonlight, and the flat-lands shimmered vaguely. She held her eyes on the sharp peaks which old Santa Cruz had pointed out to her. Her father would be there now, under these saw-toothed summits. And Gregg? The rebellion returned which always came to her when that pang of wistfulness seized her. Her head went back, but not for long. Soon it was bowed, and her eyes were soft with longing.

So she was sitting—and how long it had been thus she did not know—when a sound reached her ears: the footfall of a horse. It was nearing the corrals. She rose to her feet and searched the shadows for the visitor.

Whoever it was, was coming slowly. And that slowness might be to insure silence. A lonely land, where it was well to make sure of the stranger who you met, before you showed yourself. There was a little table in the hallway near the front door, one of those small center tables which were usually to be found in sitting-rooms, and on this a single-action revolver was always to be found lying in its leather holster. Nan slipped inside the door and took the weapon; when she came forth again, the horse and rider were visible, halted between the house and the

corral. Nan choked back an outcry, and for a moment she stood there on the veranda steps, rigid, leaning forward gazing at the figure in the saddle with wide unbelieving eyes.

For this was a girl; and her hair showed in the moonlight, glittering dully, a copper-colored mass.

UNCONSCIOUS of all else save the wonder of seeing her here, and at this hour, Nan hurried across the beaten earth of the yard; and it was the eyes of the other, fixed upon the weapon, that made her remember it.

"I didn't know it was a woman—" She was breathing hard as if she had been running, and the words seemed to choke in her throat; a sudden feeling of calamity had come over her. And as Lou started to answer, she swayed a little in the saddle. Nan dropped the belted revolver and took a swift step to the horse; her arms went out; and while she was helping the girl down, she was forgetful of all else but sympathy.

"I'm all right. It's just because I've got here—at last—" There was a soft richness in that voice, the vibrant low note which comes to a woman who has lived and felt deeply. This Nan heard and recognized in spite of her own lack of knowledge of the world. And even in this moment while her heart was going out to the other in her distress, she had a feeling as if she were, in her inexperience, facing a seasoned antagonist. That passed before a poignant fear. And—

"Something has happened?" she cried.

"I came to warn your father."

"He has gone." Nan's voice had turned dead. "He went this morning."

"I was afraid of that." The other voice had lost its vibrance now.

"Tell me—" Nan checked herself, for Lou was clinging to the saddle-horn, and her body drooped, leaning against the weary horse.

"It was late in the morning when I started, and I rode hard." She was saying it as if none other were here, as if she were speaking to some one far away. And Nan was thinking:

"She rode from Delight." That was a long day's journey for a man in the saddle. Then she spoke.

"You're going to rest now." Decision was in her voice. She slipped her arm under Lou's arm and took her to the house, and when she had left her in the living-room, she ran out and put up the horse. Returning, she lit the lamp. The face in the chair was white, and the eyes were large in the mellow radiance. They followed her questioningly.

"You need a bite to eat," Nan announced quietly, but the other shook her head.

"I'm a lot better. And I couldn't eat. I must tell you now. There may be time—

"You see, there were no men to go—none that I knew I could trust with a message. The Apaches had killed a couple of freighters in the Dragoons, and a party had just ridden out. It was then that I heard this thing—how a posse had started down to Mexico early in the morning. And they'd given it out—this man Landusky had—that they were after the boys. After Brazos and the others."

If Nan had only heard the way she said that name, she would have learned much just then. But her ears were deafened by a sudden tumult of feeling which had swept over her—a tumult of feeling born of the knowledge that her fears were being realized, the vague fears which had been with her all that day. She missed the rich low note which came like a caress, and the softness of Lou's eyes when she mentioned her lover.

"He claimed, this Landusky, that the posse were going after them to save your father from them—that he had

had information that they were going to rob your father."

Nan nodded. Her face was rigid.

"Who was it went?" she asked.

"Four men from Chiricahua. I don't know them. It doesn't make any difference, anyhow. But the two from Delight, I do know. And one'd had trouble with your father."

"Haynor," Nan said quietly.

"Haynor." Lou repeated the name as if it were poisonous. "And—you do not understand this—but a girl—a girl like I am—hears many things. You see,"—she straightened her body in the chair; her head went back a little, and her face grew tight,— "I work at a table in the Eldorado, dealing faro sometimes, and sometimes lookout. Well, anyway, where the men are there is always talk, and I hear it all. And so I know enough to be certain—from little things that I've caught—to be certain that this posse, as they call it, is out to rob your father—probably to kill him. And they intend to throw the blame on the rustlers, who are down there somewhere across the line now. There's one of them that Haynor hates. He tried to kill him—"

"I heard of it," Nan said steadily. And she was thinking:

"It was to save him. She saved him once before." And for a moment she felt hard as stone.

"I knew," Lou was going on. "And so I came. If there had been a man—"

Then Nan looked at her face, white and drawn with weariness; and she was telling herself:

"The Apaches out. And all that long day's ride. And she could come alone for him. And you have two for whom to go."

And she said very gently: "There's time. And you've saved them both." And the longing was on her—gripping her like a strong hand—to cry out:

"You love him dearly. No dearer than I do, though."

"And now," she went on aloud, "you're going to get some sleep."

The hospitality of the wild country by the border was such as to make the other take this as a matter of course; but when Nan led her to a room, and she had looked about it to discover among its furnishings what told her that she was to sleep in the girl's bed, Lou paused on the threshold. The halting was involuntary. She saw the other's face soften a little as the eyes met hers. And before she could speak, Nan was holding out her hand.

"Good night," she whispered. And she turned away with her finger on her lips.

The house was silent, save for the heavy breathing of the two sleepers in the end room. In the stillness Nan sat down in the chair which Lou had occupied a few moments before; and she wrote some lines on a sheet of paper which she slipped under her mother's door. Then she departed on tiptoe to the corral. The single-action revolver was lying where she had dropped it; she picked up the

His horse reared; then it leaped forward so abruptly that he all but lost his seat.



weapon and its belted holster, and hurried on to the saddle shed.

Jack Flood's best horse was munching hay beside the pony which Lou had ridden. She caught up Jack's horse and saddled it; and she was saying, over and over to herself:

"Now it's your turn. If she could do it, so can you."

Then she struck out for the two sharp peaks which lay outlined black against the stars; and sometimes as she rode, she strove to reassure herself:

"Because she loves him doesn't mean that he loves her."

CHAPTER XV

IF Bill Savage had but kept to his program, as he had announced it, there is no telling how matters might have fallen out; but being a seasoned hand in the grim old game of hide-and-seek as practiced on both sides of the line by hard men,—red men and white and Mexicans of mixed blood,—he was not holding to schedule.

Even Santa Cruz Casteñada, whom the cattleman trusted implicitly, was astonished as the afternoon was waning and he learned that the expedition was one day ahead of the appointed time.

"Gives us a chance to take a look around," his employer told him; and when they had ridden another half-mile, he added: "Don't pay to do what yo're expected to when yo're packin' this much money."

Where they were traveling, two barren ranges of mountains rose, one to the east and one to the west of the road. And a few miles ahead of them these converged in the south. The gorge wherein lay the spring that was to be their camping-place according to arrangement, was in the slender angle at the meeting-place of the two ranges.

"Señor," old Santa Cruz said, "I understand. And in the mountains to our right there is water—a cistern in

the rock, filled by the winter rains. The spot is high up, and it is hard to reach."

"Sounds good to me," Bill Savage answered; and when the Mexican had pointed out the distant niche within the wall of granite where lay one of those pools which the Mexicans call "*tenajas*" and the Americans, "tanks," the cattle-man remarked:

"No need to leave a trail behind us."

With this intention in view they left the beaten track after the manner which the Apaches had used in many a flight, to the bewilderment of many a pursuing troop of cavalry—the manner which the cattle-thieves and outlaws adopted in their turn. When they reached a bit of rocky ground incapable of holding hoof-prints, a rider turned off, taking a pack-mule with him. Thus one after another swung away from the road, keeping to the naked rock as much as possible, picking his own route to the cisterns high on the mountain's naked flank—until the last had left, and anyone who followed—if such a one were interested in reading the trail—would find it slowly growing fainter, and in the end would come to an empty path.

ALL of this took a great deal of time, and the sun was low when they assembled under a sheer cliff of granite at the edge of a pool of sweet rain-water. The landscape whence they had departed lay far beneath them, looking like a huge relief map. The vaqueros set to the work of unpacking the mules and watering the animals. And Savage conferred once more with Santa Cruz.

"The idee is," the former said, "nobody in the country looks for us to show up till tomorrow."

"And if some one were after money in these *aparejos*," the Mexican murmured, "they would be at the meeting-place ahead of time. Perhaps tonight. Is it not so, señor?"

"Waitin' to ambush us," the cow-man added grimly.

"Then, señor," Santa Cruz proposed, "it would be well if I were to ride ahead and take the quiet look around. Why not? Eh?"

Savage chuckled, then nodded. "Go to it," he said.

"In three hours," Santa Cruz told him, "I will be back. If I get into trouble, you will hear my rifle."

So he rode away; and Bill Savage waited while the dusk came creeping up the side of the mountain, and after it the darkness, growing deeper with the hours. At last he heard the tinkle of stones where the horse was coming up the mountain-side. Animal and rider became visible outlined against the mellow stars.

"I found more than I thought, señor," Santa Cruz whispered. And when he had attended to the bronco's wants and was eating his own delayed supper, he told of his discoveries.

"Where the spring lies in the cañon, it is at the head of a gulch that comes down steeply from the mountainside. I left my horse at the foot of the arroyo, for I saw the light of a fire. I crept up among the stones, and I came near enough to count eight men—and rifles for everyone. Bandits, perhaps." He shrugged his shoulders. "Who knows?"

"No tracks in the road we traveled by," Bill Savage remarked. "That means this bunch came from the south. Mebbe they're some smugglers. Cain't tell. But if they aint after us, we'll see 'em coming on past here tomorrow mo'nin'."

"There is something more," Santa Cruz went on. "When I returned, I saw a little light up the trail by which we traveled. It had not been there before. And so again I left my horse and went on foot, and there on the mesquite flat another outfit is camped beside the road. Six men and horses, gringos."

"Some of those rustlers," Bill Savage hazarded, but the other shook his head.

"It is not them. I saw one plainly by the fire's light." He described the man, and his employer nodded.

"I know that fellow. Haynor's his name. Yo' did a good piece of work tonight, Santa Cruz."

Soon afterward they rolled up in their blankets; and by that time Nan was a good ten miles on her way, riding through the darkness to the south, with the two saw-toothed peaks standing out against the starry sky to guide her.

The road was rough, a cart-track at the best; and there were long stretches where it was nothing more than a pack-trail; and she was riding hard. Sometimes she passed through mesquite flats where the thorny branches reached out like savage claws in the darkness, whipping her face, tearing her dress; again she traveled in the open where the fragments of rock lay strewn along the lower slopes of the mountains; and there were times when she was surrounded by forests of the tree cholla, whose spines stung her flesh like living fire.

The horse was strong and free, Jack Flood's best animal; she kept him to a swinging trot that ate up the miles. She did not feel the punishment of the rough gait; she was hardly sensible of the flagellation from the thorny whips which overhung the path, nor of the blood that warmed her face and hands and dried upon them. As she was urging the horse, so she was urged in turn by her relentless thoughts; it was as if they were riding her with whip and spur. And they never gave her rest.

It was for her father that she had come; she was doing this to save him; and the knowledge of the danger he was in made her strong, kept her strength from flagging. But there was something else, another feeling, deeper and more primitive than that love. It was the jealousy born of another love which had been growing within her. And always in her mind she had the picture of Lou making that long ride from Delight.

"If she could do it, I can!"

She kept saying it over and over to herself. And the knowledge that Gregg was down there ahead of her somewhere, that when she saved her father from those men who were seeking his life, she would be saving Gregg from the blame of the murder: that knowledge kept her invulnerable to weariness, insensible of pain.

THE night slipped by; the miles passed behind. Where the pack-train had kept to the slow mincing walk of the laden mules, she swept on without pausing for rest; and it was only when the steepness of the grade demanded, that she slackened the pace. The two sharp peaks stood out against the starry sky; the waning moon came up and bathed their remote cliffs in liquid radiance. Her eyes hung on them always. So midnight passed, and the first two hours of the morning. And she was aware of the mountain ranges drawing closer to the road on either side, and of the funnel where their flanks converged a few miles before her, under those twin summits which were her guide.

There was the pass of which old Santa Cruz had told her, where the spring lay at the head of a boulder-strewn arroyo, where her father should be now. The horse was beginning to show the first signs of weariness. The freedom of his gait had departed, and although he was still strong, there were times when she had to touch him with the spur to keep him to the pace which she had set. They plunged into a thicket of the tall mesquite, whose pale leaves glowed where the moonlight fell upon them above her head; but here, beneath their dense canopy, it was still black dark.

And now a new sense awakened, striving to tell her of danger near by.

She was so filled with the determination of her errand that for a time she paid no heed to it. But before long her nostrils widened and—suddenly the message impressed itself upon her, a tang that stained the purity of the night air: The stale odor of a dead fire.

SOME one was camped near here. The feeling of danger seized hold of her; she pulled up the horse. For her father's party should be in the pass some miles ahead. She waited, striving to see something in the darkness, straining her ears. The sour odor of the dead smoke came stronger with a shifting of the night breeze.

Those ashes were close by.

Then she heard a horse stamp, and suddenly her own horse threw up his head and whinnied loudly. The sound was so unexpected, and the alarm which it brought so strong, that her whole body grew limp; she swayed and all but fell.

"Who's that?" The voice came from the depths of the thicket, not more than fifty feet away. She stiffened and leaned forward in the saddle; her fingers closed around the butt of the six-shooter which she had taken from the house.

Another voice. And this one seemed nearer than the first. Since she was able to remember, she had lived among cowboys; and she had overheard enough profanity to make her take strong language as an unavoidable accident which one must make the best of and forget. But the words to which she listened were crawling with foulness. She knew the voice.

"Haynor!" She told herself, and she turned sick with fear and loathing.

"—an' go to sleep an' let us sleep." The voice trailed off into more oaths. "That makes three times tonight yo've woke me up along of them hosses stirrin'."

It seemed to her that she could hear them moving in their blankets. Finally the silence closed in upon the place once more.

A heavy sigh off there among the shadows of the mesquite. Then one of the sleepers began snoring. She did not know how long she waited; it seemed to her as if it was for hours; but at last she started on, the revolver in her right hand and her ears attuned to catch the slightest alarm. None came. She passed out of the thicket.

The moonlight bathed the mountain-sides above her, and she saw the funnel narrowing before her, black with shadows. She spurred the horse. And so she passed beneath the niche where her father and the vaqueros were wrapped in their blankets, fast asleep two thousand feet above her. She came to the narrowing gorge, and she left the last pool of silver radiance behind her. She felt a sudden tightening at her heart as she saw the darkness closing around her.

Far up, on either side, the light hung to the ragged rocks, moonlight and the first pallor of the approaching dawn. Down here it was black gloom. But she told herself her father was there ahead. At last the cañon widened, and she found herself in the spot where came down the arroyo, at whose head the spring lay. She had reached the end of her long ride. . . .

Here at the foot of the little tributary gulch the ground was sandy, and a single ironwood tree stood, with the rock-strewn arroyo behind it. The footing up there was bad in daylight, and in the darkness it was dangerous. She dismounted and left the horse under the tree; but as she was turning away to start on afoot, she halted suddenly. It seemed to her that she had heard a footfall up the road which led on into the south. She waited for some mo-

ments; the silence hung. Then she went on up the arroyo toward the spring.

Somewhere, undoubtedly, there was a trail, for she could hear the horses stirring uneasily where they were tethered at the head of the gulch. But in the darkness the place was nothing but a nest of huge rocks. She picked her way among them, climbing slowly. And then her heart leaped, and she was on the point of crying out for joy; for a little wavering light had sprung up under the face of the granite cliff where the spring lay. Some one was kindling a fire. She saw the man, against the background of naked rock, as he was bending over the flame, with his huge steep-crowned sombrero in his hand. Now she came on more swiftly, forgetting her weariness.

He was so intent upon his task of fanning the blaze that he did not hear her, and she was right among the sleepers, who lay wrapped in their blankets on a bit of level ground about the spring, before suspicion came to her. At the same moment he became conscious of her presence. He whirled and faced her.

This was none of her father's men. She saw his eyes widen with astonishment as they beheld her. She saw the savage little flecks of red light come into them. His dark face tightened. He uttered a single low ejaculation:

"Hah!" That was all. But there was something in the manner of his utterance, something in the way he checked the sound of his own voice, as if in the instant of his discovery he had made up his mind to keep it a secret from the others who were lying asleep around him. It made her heart stand still. Then he was springing toward her, and she was fleeing down the gulch.

She stumbled on a rock; and when she recovered herself, he was a scant two strides behind her, reaching out to seize her. A moment later she heard him crash upon the rubble of granite fragments. And she was thinking:

"If I had only brought the gun!"

It was in the holster slung beside the saddle-horn where she had left it. And there were a hundred yards between her and the ironwood tree. She felt the searing sting of a clump of Spanish bayonet upon her flesh, and after that the going was a little more even. She could hear his breathing growing closer.

There by the ironwood tree where the cliffs opened out, it was growing lighter; and the horse was standing with ears pricked forward. If she could but reach him!

Halfway between her and the tree, a mass of granite stood where it had fallen in bygone years, casting a black shadow beside it. She was conscious of something moving in that patch of blackness. A man stepped forth, blocking the trail. Her hope departed then.

CHAPTER XVI

L EAVING Brazos that same morning when Bill Savage was departing from his home ranch, Gregg rode slowly to the north.

"Plenty of time," he told himself, "and I've got to take this easy if I aim to get through to Bill."

For he knew the virtue of slow traveling in a hot land, as he knew the certainty of trouble—and the possibility of disaster—that comes with overhaste. Moreover his horse was starting on the journey with a hard run behind him and no water in his belly. The weather was hot; there was no likelihood of drink for man or animal this side of the cañon where the ambush was planned. He regarded the buckskin's head, bowed down already, nodding as it plodded onward.

"And it will be a long pull before yo' stick yo'r nose into that water-hole," he said.

A long pull indeed. And if he had but known it, bad luck was still riding with him.

He kept to the high ground. The road lay off to his left, and it was easier going there, but chances were the soldiers would be searching for him on the beaten trail.

For himself it would not be so bad, were it not that his head seemed to be splitting. There were moments when the landscape swam before his eyes and he swayed a little in the saddle. The dizziness increased as he went on. He became conscious of a humming in his ears; and once he swore, slapping at the huge flies that were circling around him. Suddenly he drew rein.

"Ten to one," he muttered, "it's too late now. And if it is, I'm in to catch hell before I'm through with this."

IT was of those flies that he was thinking, of them and of the stories he had heard—ugly stories of men with open wounds down here below the line. The blood had dried around the gash; it matted his hair. He had no canteen with him. So he did the best he could with his handkerchief, and when he had done, he bound it about his brow.

Then he went on again. Sometime during the morning he saw a dust-cloud down in the flat-lands to his left, and he knew that he had judged wisely to stick to the harder route up here among the rocks and dagger plants. But there were moments when he caught himself wishing that he had gone down there and chanced it against capture. Better to make a fight and lose,—so temptation was whispering to him,—and if he won, to find a drink at some goat-herder's hut, than to suffer up here. There were other moments when the desire to hasten forward came to him so strongly that he had to fight himself with all the will he owned, moments when he would find himself saying aloud:

"Easy, now. Take it easy, or yo' die."

In the passing of those moments he would remind himself of the tales that he had heard of men who had hastened, when they were without water and when the sun was glaring overhead, and of the terrible death that had come to those luckless ones.

But what was worse was the constant recurrence of the dizziness; when the rocks seemed to be moving before him and the mountains would rise suddenly, shutting out the sky, then recede once more and vanish utterly. And always the constant throbbing of the wound. It grew deeper with the hours.

"Reckon those flies got in their work all right," he was saying to himself during one of the lucid intervals, when a sound came which made him stiffen; his horse reared, then leaped forward so abruptly that he all but lost his seat in the saddle.

It was the harsh dry buzzing of a rattlesnake. And now, as he glanced at the ledge of lava rock which rose close by at his right hand, he saw the long sinuous body slipping back into its coils again, the ugly triangular head—as large as his fist, it seemed to him. His eyes went to the horse. There on the flank just behind the stirrup leather, a wet mark showed against the hair.

"That jump of his was all that saved me." And as the thought crossed Gregg's mind, there came another: "But saving me, he got it himself."

He swung from the saddle, and found brief satisfaction by putting a bullet through the reptile's ugly head.

"Eight feet if he's an inch," he muttered and turned his attention to the moist spot on the buckskin's flank with the tiny puncture in its center. "If it was in the leg—and there was a mud-hole near—" He shook his head.

"I could," he was reflecting, "get a mile or two more out of him."

The horse had turned his head, and was looking at him. And the sight of those two soft eyes made the man avert his face.

A mile or two, and maybe more. And every mile was going to count. And it was not for himself—there were those others: Savage riding into ambush, the women waiting at the ranch-house, Nan's face was before him.

The buckskin was trembling violently. Gregg looked at him again. And he was remembering the long miles this one had carried him, and always willing.

"Never soldiered on me once." And then he said aloud:

"He did the best he could. It's up to me now." After that he loosened the cinch and removed the saddle. And while he was doing this, he spoke to the horse in the manner of all riders, the world over. And sometimes when he spoke, the animal turned its soft eyes on him.

Rough words, and some of them would not bear repetition. For it was the habit of his breed to use strange terms by which to convey that man-to-man endearment which dogs and horses are allowed to share, when they have become old companions. If what he said were set down, it would sound sentimental at the best. And because the sentiment which prompted it was deep, it was hard for him to do the thing that he did when he had finished speaking. . . .

When the smoke had drifted away from the muzzle of the big revolver and the buckskin lay where he had sunk down on bended knees, finally to pitch forward, Gregg drew a deep breath.

After that he turned away to the saddle and took his rifle from its sheath. Without looking back, he started walking.

It was long past midday now, and the sun was getting down to real work. More than fifteen miles to the cañon where the water lay.

The dust-devils danced their slow dance upon the lowlands off to the left; the rocks about the solitary man were hazed by tenuous heat-waves. And to Gregg's eyes those rocks seemed never still. His head was getting worse.

"A little at a time," he told himself, "and rest often."

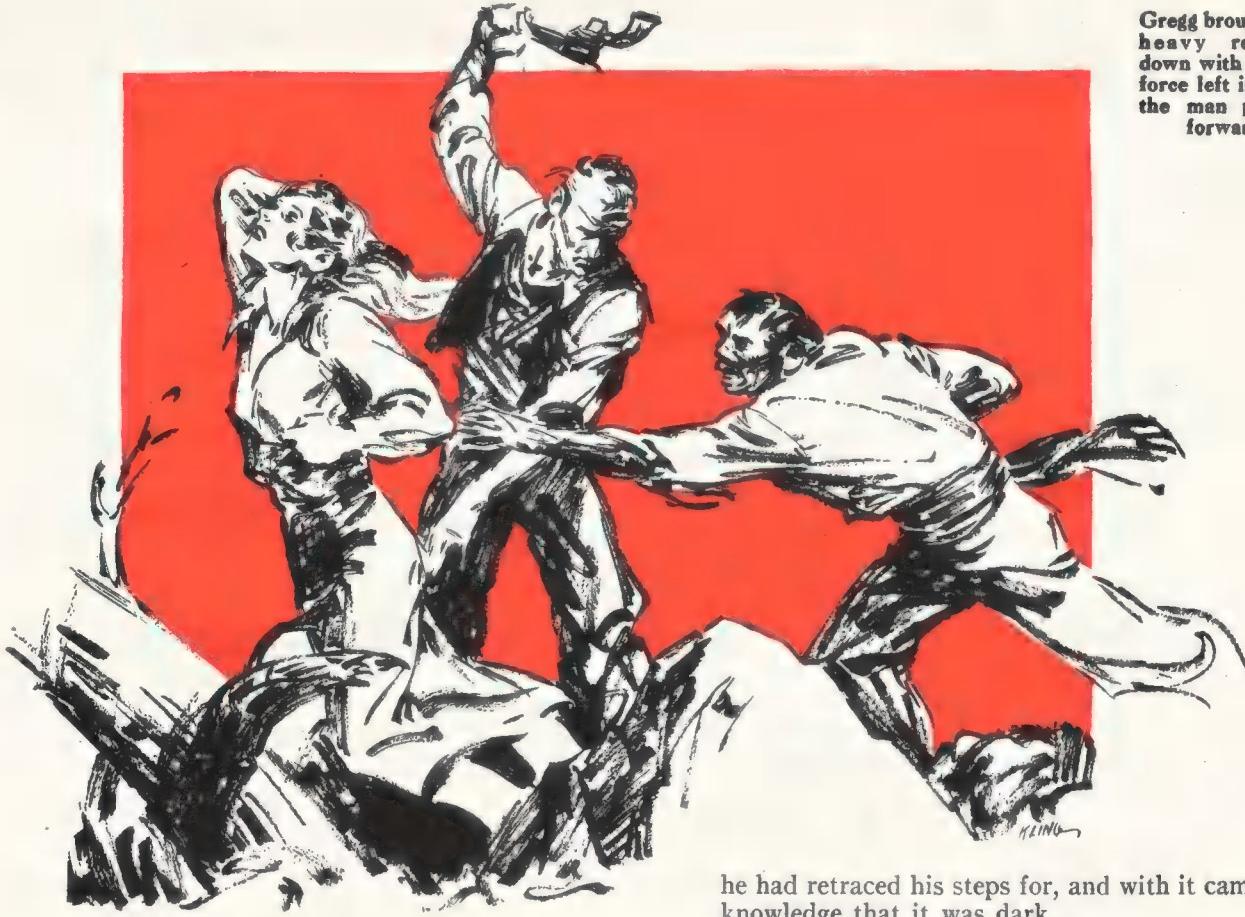
The afternoon was getting late when he had gone five miles, and twice he had discovered himself off his route. Sometimes the rocks were taking on unreal shapes; and finally he sank down in the shadow of an ironwood. His tongue was dry. Although he held a bit of mesquite twig in his mouth, chewing the hard wood, no moisture came to his cracked lips.

"Next thing I know, I'm going to get lost." The thought had occurred to him before, but he had managed to drive it away; now he knew it for the truth. He rose at last and struck off toward the lowlands.

"Find the road." He said it over and over to himself. "Find the road. And when yo' find it, hold yo'r eyes on it. Don't let it get away from yo'."

THREE were intervals when the pain in his wound was like fire; there were others when the throbbing was as if steel hammers were beating on his brain. But what frightened him was the recurrence of those periods when a strange numbness came over him, burying the pain; for then he could not tell where he was going, nor what he was doing. Now, feeling one of these as it drew on, he would sink down where it caught him, and try to hold his senses until it had passed.

"Poker and monte and the wild bunch!" he heard himself saying the words, and his voice sounded strange to his ears; it was like the voice of one of those ravens which were always roosting in the rocks near a water-hole. Poker and monte and the wild bunch. Well, that was it. That was all it had amounted to. He shut his



Gregg brought the heavy revolver down with all the force left in him; the man pitched forward.

teeth and plodded on. Some day maybe it would be different—if he got through with this—

He was in the trail now, holding his eyes on it, following it to the north, where he could see the two sharp peaks outlined against the brassy sky. He did not know how long it was since he had found the track, nor how he had discovered it. All that he did know, all he could force himself to concentrate upon, was the presence of the beaten earth—to which he must hold.

Bill Savage riding toward those same peaks under which his goal lay. And swarthy riders coming, as he was coming, from the south. And Nan, waiting for her father.

Often he saw her face, as he had seen it when she spoke to him the last time; and then he would strive to remember her as he liked to think of her—laughing as she rode beside him, or sitting close to him in the darkness that night by the little stone house on the summit of the hill.

He found himself without the rifle in his hand. Staggering up the road; and the weapon—where had he left it? And when? He stopped, and it seemed to him as if he could hear a great bell tolling within his head. And at every peal, there came a wave of pain. He was conscious of his tongue, swollen between his teeth.

HE stood there for a long time, swaying like a drunken man, trying to think. To make up his mind, he must think clearly. Whether to go back and seek the weapon, or to go on? If it were not for that wound, he could make it.

"I'll make it anyhow," he thought. And finding his mind clear for the moment, he looked ahead. He must have been going a long time. For the shadows were creeping down the flanks of the mountains.

The last that he remembered for a long while was turning back to seek the rifle. It came slowly to him, what

he had retraced his steps for, and with it came the knowledge that it was dark.

"Easy," he told himself. "I got to take it slow." He sank down and the coolness of the night enwrapped him. His fever was abating a little; he dozed off.

He must have slept for some hours, for the Great Dipper had shifted far over; it was near midnight. He got to his feet, and he fixed his eyes on the two sharp peaks standing out against the starry sky. No trail by which to hold now; he had lost that long since. He started with the two peaks for his guide.

So he came on, sometimes half a mile, sometimes only a hundred yards or so, between rests. And the rests were getting longer. But there was no sun to punish him. He mumbled a stick between his teeth and spat it out. No use. His tongue had grown too large.

Nan and Bill Savage. . . . And hold his eyes on those peaks. Keep to a straight line.

He was in the cañon, and he saw the moonlight splashed upon the rocks high above him. There ahead of him the arroyo came down from the cliffs. The spring was at its head.

And then he heard a horse nickering up the gulch.

The pounding in his head was as an enemy which he must fight and overcome if he would think. And he knew that he must think clearly now. He stood there among the rocks striving.

Nan at the ranch-house. Bill Savage riding into ambush.

And then it came to him, what he was trying to get at: They were here ahead of him, the men who had ridden from the hacienda; there waiting for the cattle-man to ride into their ambush. His mind was working more swiftly.

Asleep up there. And maybe he could steal among them. If he could but get to that water! Nothing mattered after that. Reach the spring and sink his face into it.

Nan and Bill Savage. That was it. Nan and her father. No water for him now.

So he was telling himself when he heard the tramp of a horse near by. He saw the animal and rider emerging from the gloom. He got a glimpse of them. And they were gone.

It was, he assured himself, one more hallucination. As he had seen her face before him so many times that day, and always clearly, so now he had seen her, a shadow in the shadows. Just another vision come to torture him. And he must go on.

He started slowly. But he halted once more. He was sure he had heard some one above him there in the arroyo. Then he saw the horse, standing beneath the ironwood tree; he stepped forward and touched the animal.

And as the knowledge that what he had seen and heard was reality became impressed upon him, he caught the sound of rapid footsteps. They were coming down the arroyo toward the spot where he was standing. He saw Nan—a little figure, rising to the summit of a bit of high ground; and after that, another figure following her, the figure of a man.

Gregg had his revolver in his hand. He was staggering as he ran to meet them. The bulk of a huge granite fragment shut her from his sight. A moment later she came from behind the rock, and he heard her cry out as he confronted her. Then the Mexican was upon him, and Gregg had a sudden flash of lucidity—those others sleeping up the gulch; he must not awaken them. He raised the heavy revolver at arm's-length. He brought it down with all the force left in him; the man pitched forward at his feet. Gregg sank down upon his body.

CHAPTER XVII

THE whole thing had taken place so quickly, developments had followed one another with such bewildering suddenness, that Nan stood there for a moment dazed. Hope had been high within her; the fear that took its place had been succeeded by a deeper dread, the dread of despair. And now Gregg was lying at her feet. The moment passed, and she was on her knees beside him.

The twilight of the coming dawn was leaking slowly down into the cañon. She saw the bandage about his brow, the dried blood and the dust that caked the matted hair, his cracked and swollen lips.

There was a quart canteen slung to her saddle—it was only at the last minute she had thought to take it along, and the realization of how near she had been to leaving it behind frightened her when she sprang to her feet and started after it. Jack Flood's horse was standing under the ironwood with the reins dangling from the bridle; he had not stirred since she departed; but while she untied the leather strings, she noticed how eagerly the animal's ears were twitching, and how his muzzle was pointing toward the water-hole. Turning away, she got sight of the revolver in its belted holster, and she delayed long enough to sling the belt about her waist.

Gregg's eyes were open, and he was striving to rise; and when she had sunk down beside him once more and slipped her arm about his shoulders, he stared into her face as if she were unreal. She let the weight of his body rest against her while she raised the canteen to his lips.

"Just a sup and that is all," she whispered, for she had heard men tell of the danger of giving a draft to one far gone in thirst. But it took all her fortitude to pluck the canteen away.

The punishment of his weight was not easy to bear; but when it lessened and she saw him leaning forward a moment later, supporting himself upon one arm, she felt a strange mingling of regret with the relief. His eyes

were fixed on hers, and the terrible unbelieving stare had gone from them. His swollen lips were moving; there was something in his voice that chilled her; it did not sound like any voice that she had ever heard; it was as harsh and arid as the rubbing of two stones together.

"Where is Bill?"

"Hush!" she bade him, and lifted the canteen to his lips again; and she was thinking—as one will remember in time of stress—how, on that afternoon in Delight when he had spoken to her the last time, he had said those same words. Then she had driven him away. And now—

The bitter pang of self-reproach that stabbed her breast was followed by a longing to press her lips against his swollen lips.

"That is enough." She took the canteen from his mouth and screwed the cap into place. He was frowning, looking straight before him as if he were trying hard to solve the puzzle of her presence, and suddenly his eyes came back to her.

"Yo' are alone?"

She nodded. "I came to find my father."

"He is not here?"

She shook her head.

"I was hunting for him too—to warn him. Those greasers aim to ambush him." He staggered to his feet. "No time for us to talk—we got to clear out before they find us."

His six-shooter was where he had dropped it beside the dead Mexican. She stooped and picked it up, and while she was slipping it into Gregg's holster, she looked upon the body. It lay on one side, with the knees doubled, as if the man were still in the act of running.

Now the light was growing brighter on the flank of the peak across the cañon. The dusk was thinning down here in the bed of the dry gulch. They started toward its mouth.

The horse was gone.

The great boulders about them shut off the higher portion of the gully from their view, but they heard the rattle of stones, the clash of hoofs above.

"He's up there near the spring already." And while Nan was speaking, the animal came into sight, topping the summit of a steep rise. They watched him as he stood there for a moment, with the reins dangling before him; then he vanished among the rocks. She felt Gregg's hand upon her arm.

"Another minute, and he'll have 'em all awake."

WHERE the arroyo came into the main cañon, some thirty yards away, two heaps of talus flowed from the cliffs, flanking its mouth like portals beside a gateway. He was pointing to the nearer of them.

"If we can make the top—" His voice was growing weaker; she saw him swaying like a drunken man. She threw her arm about his waist and tried to steady him.

"I'm all right—until my head goes back on me again," he told her thickly.

A patch of light was bathing the crest of the peak across the cañon; the sun was nearly up. Gregg stumbled as he ran, and once he halted; he would have fallen if she had not held him then.

The land was level here, an open space whose every detail was in plain sight of the water-hole. And she could hear the horses up there nickering welcome to the newcomer.

"Only a few steps more—" She realized that she was sobbing when she pleaded with him.

"Yo' go, and leave me here. They'll think I was alone," he muttered.

She clasped his body the more tightly and let his weight come upon her. And she cried aloud:

"Oh, try! Dear heart, you must!"

It was as if those words, wrung from her by despair, had pierced his dulling senses; she felt the burden of his body growing less; his sagging limbs were moving. And she heard him whispering: "I will."

And in that moment when she saw his bowed head going back and his face tighten with a sudden purpose beneath the mask of dried blood and caked dust; when he lurched forward, freeing himself from her embrace; she knew that he was answering her words of love, with the last wan strength within him.

So they ran, now halting, now plunging on more swiftly; and she had forgotten all else—the danger which hung over them, her dread for her father—all but the exaltation which had arisen from the love which she had voiced and the love which he was showing.

They had crossed the open, and they were at the foot of the boulder-slide. Here they were shut off from sight of the water-hole. A voice came down the gulch and then another answering in Spanish.

Gregg was swaying from side to side. His knees bent, and he crumpled slowly to the earth.

Her fingers were busy with the cap of the canteen. It tinkled among the rocks at her feet. Letting it lie, she dashed some water into his face; and when she saw his swollen tongue licking at the drops upon his lips, her eyes filled with tears.

IT seemed to her as if it took him minutes to rise to his feet. And afterward when the memory of that climb came back to her, it was like one of those ugly dreams wherein one strives to run and can but barely move. Slow work at best, for the boulders lay in steep confusion, and Gregg's mind was beginning to wander. Sometimes he fell; and sometimes he was calling her father's name.

Once, near the top, when he pitched forward on his face, and she was striving to drag him to his feet, despair returned to her, and she sank down, willing to die. Then she remembered Lou, riding from Delight to bring the news to the ranch-house, and her strength came back.

The light had widened, growing brighter on the mountain's flanks; and she could feel the first heat of the morning, when they reached the summit of the knoll. A dozen ragged boulders encircled the place; she looked upon the cañon bed below, and the ironwood tree at the mouth of the arroyo.

Within that vista nothing moved. There was no sound of voices now. She turned to Gregg. He was sitting with his back to one of the rocks, his head bent forward over his chest, his limp arms at his sides. She unwound the handkerchief from his forehead and what she saw beneath it made her shudder. She clenched her teeth, fighting the sickness which came over her, and she set to work bathing the wound. When she had done, she tore strips from her clothing and bound it up once more. His lips were moving.

"Water."

His voice was like the voice of a dead man. She raised the canteen to his mouth; but when she started to take it away, he seized it in both hands, and she had to fight with all her strength to tear it from him. Only a little left now. She set it down between two rocks, and he sank back muttering.

"Poker—and monte—and the wild bunch—" Suddenly his voice grew louder: "Stick to the trail. Yo've got—to—find—Bill." And then she heard him call her name.

She came close to him and slipped her arm about his shoulders.

"It is—all right," she whispered. "I am here." And she strove to quiet him, but his voice went on and on—

until at last it grew faint, his head sank forward and he seemed to sleep.

Where had he come from? And where was her father now? She asked herself the questions over and over again. And the light spread down the mountain-side across the cañon. The sun was up.

"How did yo' get me here?" Gregg's eyes were upon her, and the strange fixed look had gone from them.

"Hush!" She placed her finger on her lips. "They're down there now. I hear them."

The faint rattle of stones came from the cañon bed. She crept to the nearest boulder and looked. Five of them gathered about the dead Mexican. The murmur of their voices reached her ears. She turned at a new sound behind her.

Gregg was crawling toward her, his revolver in his hand. She raised her hand for him to halt.

"I can handle myself now," he whispered. She shook her head.

"Stay where you are," she bade him. "I'll tell you when the time comes." And as he was about to disobey: "You must save your strength—for me."

"For you," he repeated the words a second time as if to himself. "Yes, that is right."

She lifted her head above the boulder, and now those five were on their hands and knees, scanning the rubble of loose rocks, dragging their rifles beside them. She saw one of them raise his arm; the others halted, watching him. He pointed down the gulch, toward her hiding-place. She sank down behind her shelter.

So she remained for a long time listening; and it seemed to her as if her heart had ceased to beat. The silence hung. She glanced around at Gregg. He was leaning forward, one hand resting on a rock, and in the other his revolver. His eyes met hers, and he nodded; but his face was crevassed with deep lines, and it was weary, like the face of an old man; his body was swaying as if he were about to fall.

It might have been the passing of half an hour; to her it was as the dragging of many hours; and there had been no further sound. The white sunlight was setting the ridges and the peaks agleam across the cañon. The heat was growing here.

Then she became conscious of a faint scraping near by. A stone fell, setting other bits of broken granite loose. The rattling ceased.

The stark outline of the boulder which sheltered her was blurred by something dark. A thatch of dead black hair appeared, and then a swarthy face against the pallid sky less than four feet away from her.

She saw the eyes go wide; the lips were parting in a dog-like grin, showing the white teeth; and she was lifting the heavy single-action revolver, about to pull the trigger, when the face vanished in a pungent mist of black powder-smoke; the roar of Gregg's forty-five was in her ears.

The echoes leaped from the cliffs across the cañon. The silence was closing in upon them, slowly as, if reluctantly, when the flat report of a rifle set them off again.

CHAPTER XVIII

HIGH in the zenith where the sky's blue was already gone to brass, a solitary buzzard wheeled and dipped, regarding the foreshortened landscape far beneath; another bald-necked wanderer of the air sped from his roost among the barren peaks to join him, and the two spiraled widely, waiting on the promise which the steep-walled niche between the ranges held to them. They were the only living creatures to witness all that was going on; but being with-



The face vanished in a mist of powder-smoke; the roar of Gregg's forty-five was in her

out interest, save in the good pickings and the prospects of these growing richer, they remained unappreciative of the drama now tightening toward its climax.

So, without knowing why these things took place, nor caring, they had beheld the fight of the two who crept away to hide among the rocks; and they had gazed down upon the swarthy men, descending the arroyo from their camp beside the water-hole, crawling on their hands and knees, dragging their rifles beside them. And if these lofty watchers had but owned an understanding as far-reaching as their vision, they would have had rich food for mirth, watching that caution, born of mingled dread and deadly greed.

For other men were moving on that far-flung stage. And of these others six were now riding up the cañon from the north. In them burned the same deadly enmity and over them hung the same fear of those whom they had set forth to murder, that gripped the swarthy men among the rocks ahead of them.

They were riding two and two, and their jaded horses lifted their heads as the scent of the water reached their nostrils.

"There where the cañon spreads out—that's where the spring lays," Haynor said. And Kettle Belly answered with a weary oath.

"Me, I don't like the looks of this." He glanced about him at the steep cliffs; then his eyes wandered to the pallid sky, and he changed color as he pointed upward.

"A man would think," the other told him, "yo'd never seen a buzzard before."

"I never yet seen one that fetched good luck," the fat man muttered. "And I'll swear on a Bible I heard some one go by our camp an hour before we rolled out of our blankets."

"And if yo' did, what of it, anyhow?" Haynor edged his horse nearer and leaned from his saddle. "Savage aint anywhere near here now; he won't be along till nigh sun-down. What little sleep we had a chance to get, yo' took

away from us—an' got these others half in the notion to stampede already with yo'r line of talk." He lowered his voice still further: "Keep yo'r mouth shut unless yo' aim to fall out with me."

Kettle Belly made no reply. But from time to time he looked upward at the two specks at the zenith of the sky's pale dome, and his loose lips sagged; perspiration dotted his brow.

Behind these two the other four came on, talking in low tones among themselves. Now and again, glancing around, Haynor would catch the eyes of one of these fixed on him; and what he read in their faces brought no confidence.

Where the cañon widened ahead of them, he saw the mouth of the arroyo, and he found reassurance in the sight; for dry camp is a dreary business, and riding forth without one's breakfast in the gray of early dawn has lowered the morale of far better men than were those with Haynor.

"After they get their bellies full up there," he was thinking, "they'll have all day to rest before Savage shows up with his 'dobe dollars."

The angry voice of a single-action revolver came like an abrupt contradiction. He pulled up his horse; the flat report of a rifle followed, and before the echoes of those two shots died, he was dragging his own rifle from its sheath beneath the stirrup-leather. He had a glimpse of a steep-crowned sombrero sinking behind a boulder two hundred yards away. For him there was but one answer to that sight.

Savage and his vaqueros had come ahead of time.

As the idea crossed his mind, he heard one of the men behind him voicing it. If he had known that while those words were being spoken other voices up there among the rocks were announcing the same thing in Spanish, it might have brought to him realization of the sardonic humor owned by the particular fate that handles men of guilty conscience, but it would not have helped him in the least. For by the time he had his carbine in his hands, two of the riders who had set forth so blithely in quest of plunder yesterday morning were already in full flight, and the rest were showing plain symptoms of being in the mind to join them.

He flung an oath after the fugitives.

"The first man follows them, I'll kill him myself," he told the others. A slug flicked the rubble of pebbles at his

feet; others snarled overhead; and the venomous clamor of the rifles drifted down the cañon.

"Come on, you!" He poured a stream of epithets upon his companions, and threw his weapon to his shoulder. The noise of their volley was in his ears. He fired a second time, and then a third.

And then he realized that the others had ceased firing. Into the stillness came the clatter of receding hoofs. Wheeling his mount to join the rout, he caught sight of Kettle Belly's horse lying upon its side close by the trail; and as he passed, he heard the owner's voice calling his name. He did not so much as turn his head to get a second look, but spurred straight on. And now he remembered those two specks in the sky at which he had seen the other gazing.

"I hope the buzzards get a meal off yo'," he shouted by way of farewell.

The great birds dipped and wheeled high in the pallid sky. They looked upon the remote landscape beneath their outspread wings. One party fleeing to the north, one to the south. And in the cañon-bed a solitary figure, unlovely as he stood with legs outspread. He raised his clenched fist and shook it after the last rider, already growing smaller where the cañon widened and the long flatlands opened toward the boundary. Then he sank down beside his dead horse and picked up the rifle which had fallen from his hands when he had crashed to earth with the animal.

After that he waited for a long time, watching the upper reaches of the gorge, listening for some sound of approaching enemies. None showed. His eyes went to the pallid sky and found the two foul birds; they had drawn closer now.

When he had sat gazing at them for some moments, he got to his feet again and started slowly toward the arroyo at whose upper end the water-hole lay beneath the cliff. So for a hundred yards he went, and then he halted, listening.

There was no sound; it was as if none had ever been about the place. No living form in sight, save for those remote birds above his head. The wavering film of heated air which hung over the rocks was the only moving thing down here. Gradually he began to realize a portion of the truth.

Those other men who had fired upon them had ridden off into the south.

AS the suspicion crept into his mind, he grew a little bolder, and he started on once more, slowly, with frequent halts and cautious reconnoiterings; and when he reached the mouth of the arroyo, the sun was high, the heat was pouring down into the cañon, and his lips were dry. He saw the huddled body of the Mexican, and he dropped behind a rock as if the dead man were a living enemy. While he was crouching there trying to understand what this might mean, what promise of new danger might lie behind the discovery, he heard the footfalls of a horse among the boulders farther up the wash. And what he discovered in the next moment brought to him the first hope which he had known that day, a hope that made his bad face tighten with squirming lines of evil.

The buzzards dipped and wheeled and dipped again. Four of them now. And two dead men down in the rocks below their outspread wings. Another lying still as the dead.

Only a pair moved—and one of these was a girl. And still the huge birds hung there in the pallid sky, held by a new threat which the wide landscape revealed to them.

Once while the noise of the firing had been near its crescendo, Nan had looked forth. She saw several steep-crowned sombreros bobbing up and down among the rocks beneath her; two hundred yards or so away were four riders.

Little puffs of white smoke were thinning and vanishing there; the dust rose in a tenuous mist from their horses' hoofs; and farther on, two others were fleeing headlong into the north. Then she told Gregg:

"That's not my father's outfit."

He had sunk back against the rock, and the revolver was still in his hand; but his head was drooping forward on his chest. His lips moved slowly. She could barely hear him saying,

"Water."

And when she had let him drink, she shook the canteen; only a few sips left.

The rattle of the rifles ceased as abruptly as it had begun. Then the stillness came again, and she waited for a long time.

Up there in the north a dead horse lay upon its side, looking grotesquely large of body. From where she was she could not see the man who crouched near by.

SHE came back to Gregg, and gave him the last of the water.

"They've gone," she said, and he muttered the words after her as if he were trying to understand. She raised her voice.

"I'm going after water." But he did not answer her. He lay there limp; and the hoarse sound of his breathing made her wince.

She took the canteen and slipped away.

The heap of talus lay beneath the cliff like a long wedge thrust into the main cañon. She climbed down the side facing the branch arroyo, and so she saw nothing of the man who was coming up the main trail; and as yet he had no glimpse of her.

The path to the water-hole was steep, and there were places where she had to halt, for she was weary from the night's long ride and what she had gone through since day-break. But she forgot the weariness when she looked up and saw Jack Flood's horse standing in the shadow of the overhang.

Then in her eagerness she thought of nothing else, but hurried straight on. And when she had the reins in her hand, she rested for some moments in the coolness of the shade by the pool. If she had looked down the gulch into the main cañon, she would have seen the man called Kettle Belly then.

In the next moment she was starting to descend the steep trail, leading the animal. And Kettle Belly crouched behind a boulder waiting for her.

Just what he would do when his moment came, he did not know—beyond one purpose. In that country a man on foot was a man facing a very ugly death. And he was going to have that horse.

The tinkle of falling stones, the occasional slow scrape of hoofs as they slid over some larger rock—he listened to the sounds; and they were steadily growing louder, coming closer.

Growing much louder. Too loud, in fact.

That was not one horse, but several; and they were coming at a rapid pace.

Kettle Belly raised his head and looked around; and knew he had looked too late.

For he was gazing up into the muzzle of a big single-action revolver.

Too Much Mustard

Wherein two big
clue and trail men
darkly contrive
after the fashion of
correspondence-
school super-sleuths
—and excitement
runs high.

By

ARTHUR K. AKERS

Illustrated by Everett Lowry

COLUMBUS COLLINS, Demopolis' foremost and hungriest colored private detective, stood gloomily debating with himself outside a Strawberry Street lunch-room. Inside the establishment his small boat-footed assistant sleuth, "Bugwine" Breck, could be seen busily engaged in boarding out his half of the Collins' agency's last—and apparently final—fee. Bugwine had recently been run over by a wagon, and was still liberally bandaged from that unfortunate incident.

At the annoying sight within, Mr. Collins contemplated with fresh distaste the harrowing choice confronting him: if he gave up detecting, his personal prestige around Baptist Hill was gone; but if he accepted this lunch-room's proffered job as dish-washer, he ate.

It was while thus being torn between pride and provisions, that Jeff Baker shuffled importantly into view. Jeff was a small, stove-colored darky with big feet, clothes and notions, who in civil life was porter in the drug-store of one Mr. Ambrose Fogg.

While white, Mr. Fogg ran a pharmacy catering chiefly to a dusky clientele, with a stock of goods consequently running heavily to cure-alls of the type proclaimed as having been disclosed to an Indian by the Great Spirit in a dream. Cost-price, fourteen cents; selling-price one dollar and fifty cents the bottle.

And these nostrums were to prove the heart of Mr. Baker's errand—they and the well-known failing of members of his race for swallowing any proffered remedy for any ill.

"Doct' Fogg lookin' fo' you all over, C'lumbus!" Jeff hailed the sleuth.

"Huccome?" countered Mr. Collins uneasily. Having the white folks looking for a boy never had spelled any luck to him. They always wanted a job of work done, or a loan repaid, or something else unpleasant.

"Say he got a detectin' case fo' you," clarified Jeff. He paused to pick up a suddenly-spied horseshoe and an old stove-leg, from the gutter.

Columbus paid no attention. Jeff was all the time picking up old iron here lately. But his news was important.



"Whar at Gladstone now?" he dragged what he fondly believed to be a red herring across the trail.

The Collins agency had never had a white-folks client before. Retention might be followed by nourishment!

"Be right wid you soon as I puts dat Bugwine boy back in he place ag'in," he excused himself.

"Fotch dem two last po'k-chops wid you! And step on hit, boy!" he bawled through the lunch-room door at the diligent diner therein. "Us got new case!"

Thus it came about that the jaundiced glance of pharmacist Fogg at length fell upon a lanky, loose-lipped colored boy with a tin star on his vest, accompanied by a shorter one wearing bandages, a straw hat in February, a down-trodden expression, and bearing a yardstick. Finally, bringing up the rear, came his own porter, Jeff Baker, dressed to the ears in a worried look and a black frock coat.

Not that Jeff hung around! He seemed to have business elsewhere. And Mr. Fogg could not but note the sag to his coat pockets.

"So you're the detective, eh?" He turned disappointedly to the gangling Columbus.

Automatically Mr. Collins produced his correspondence-school-of-detecting diploma. He had been doubted before.

The druggist waved it aside. "What's that there with you?" He pointed to the pigeon-toed Bugwine with his pork-chop.

"Dat's my 'sistant. Caddies fo' me while I's detectin'," expanded Columbus. "Bugwine carries de tools, an' moves coal-piles lookin' fo' hidden evidence."

Mr. Fogg's thin smile was replaced by an annoyed expression. He pointed to the glass-enclosed shelves behind him.

"See all those medicines?" he questioned sharply.

"Sho is look noble!" responded Columbus diplomatically.

But the accompanying Mr. Breck did more. He gulped, and his eyes shone like a dog's outside a butcher shop as he sidled around behind the counter for a closer view of the scene. For Bugwine belonged to that school of Southern negro that will take internally—and flourish upon—anything bottled, from Three Feathers to horse liniment!

"Well," scowled the pharmacist, "every night now, some of them are disappearing off my shelves. It's got to be stopped! And I want you to find out who's doing it. Catch him and bring him in to me, and I'll slip you five dollars on the spot!"

"Means you pays us five dollars, is us fatch de crook an' de ev'dence here?"

"Right! I figure you'll be better than the police for a job like this. And I think I know who it is—I just can't fire him till there's some evidence on him, is all. You get me?"

"Done had you, boss-man! You craves de evidence 'gainst yo' porter Jeff—"

"If he's the one, yes. And he not only works *here*, but I've found out he's started doing a big patent-medicine-selling business on his own hook, over near the Frisco depot."

Bugwine took two devastating nibbles at the firm's remaining pork-chop, and made a mental note of Jeff's other address. A boy never knew when he'd have a pain.

"Us checks up around de Frisco first, Cap'n," announced Columbus decisively. "Soon as gits me fo'-bits in advance fo' spenses round de barb'cue stand."

"What expenses around what barbecue stand?"

"First thing you got do, suh, is you want find out nothin' round D'mop'lis—white or black," explained Columbus, "—is git on a stool in Bees' Knees Thompson's place, an' start eatin' an' list'nin'. De fo'-bits'll 'tend to dat fo' me jes' right."

"When us gwine to Bees' Knees?" the *Doctor Watson* of Baptist Hill took up an again-important matter with his superior, immediately they were outside.

"Us?" Is you say 'us?' " countered Columbus. "'Ca'ze, is you is, you's wetter'n de middle drop in de Lantic ocean! Business in barb'cue stands always gits 'tended to puusonal by de head of de firm. Yo' job is round de Frisco depot, checkin' up on whut Jeff's been doin'."

Some six hours later Mr. Collins finished shutting the front door of Bees' Knees' place for the fourth time between himself and his assistant, and resumed his stool at the counter. Bugwine was harder to keep out of an eating-place than a rabbit-dog! But this again accomplished, recent positions and conditions were again reversed; it was Columbus who ate, while it was Bugwine who flattened an envious nose against the outer surface of a lunch-room pane, and thought! And the thoughts of a hungry under-dog are dangerous, as czars—and ultimately Columbus Collins—have ever found!

Like the thoughts of youth, they can be long, long thoughts. And Bugwine was employing his spare time recalling and rekindling his grievances—chief among them Columbus' continued cavalier treatment of himself, and Henry Roebuck's running over him with that wagon.

None of the threat of which, however, crossed the mind of Columbus now as he continued what he regarded as skillful cross-questioning of the stand's proprietor.

"Whar at Gladstone Smith now?" he dragged what he fondly believed to be a red herring across the trail of his newest case.

A depressed look clouded Mr. Thompson's froglike face.

"Gladstone git hisse'f all gummed up in he vuctuals since he quit eatin' here," he covered cause and effect in one sentence. "Been lyin' in de bed hollerin' like a stuck hawg fo' about two days now. Look like aint no med'cine de doctor leave him do him no good no mo'!"

Columbus grasped the cue: it made his next question sound less forced.

"Whut you know 'bout dis Jeff gittin' into de med'cine business?" he hazarded as he inhaled a saucerful of cold coffee.

"Jes' some mo' of Jeff's foolishness—like him gwine about pickin' up old iron all de time," deprecated Bees' Knees. "Somep'n give dat li'l frock-tail coat boy a notion he could buck Henry Roebuck in de remedy-business round here, is all."

"Jeff all busted out wid ambition, dat's a fact," agreed Columbus. "Eve'ybody know Henry got stranglehold on de med'cine business on de Hill. Uh—wonder whar at Jeff gittin' he med'cine *from*?"

"Dat's somep'n dey aint never tell," Bees' Knees grew vague. "Let eve'ybody know whut's in a med'cine, an' hit aint got no authority no mo'."

Columbus felt foiled. Then he cheered up. He realized his depression was unjustified, so long as Chapter Twelve remained in his detecting textbook. There, as before, lay his course in case of stalemate or bafflement!

With which happy thought in mind, he emerged from the stand, barely to miss stepping upon the gloom-bitten Bugwine loafing without.

"And dar *you* is!" he barked irritatedly. "Why aint you take up de slack in dem britches an' git out git yo'se'f a clue? Done had de case half a day, an' all you smells out is a rest'rant!"

"Wuz I git a clue, you couldn't foller hit wid a hawse and wagon!"

"Is I aint got to git on back to Doct' Fogg's an' git us some mo' spense money, I'd smack you sicker'n Gladstone is!"

But Columbus and his satellite found Mr. Fogg in no mood for further advances. Rather, he reported with no little heat that two bottles of liniment, three of pain-killer, and one of hair-restorer had become mysteriously missing since the Collins Detective Agency had taken the case.

"Jeff jes' de same as in de jail-house now, den! 'Spectin' de ev'dence most any minute now," Columbus put out the answer he felt would suit Mr. Fogg best.

"And if you boys are going to get any five dollars, you better beat me to something!" the sputtering druggist put a capstone on their bad news. "I've got a little scheme of my own that's fixing to go into action."

The worried Columbus and Bugwine got no comfort out of looking at each other. Anyway they took this, it sounded exactly like the death-knell of next week's meals. Time out grew necessary for a huddle in privacy around the corner.

For which reason they missed important events immediately following their departure—such as Mr. Fogg stepping into the adjoining grocery, where his purchases singularly pleased him, it seemed, as he returned with them, to busy himself behind his prescription counter.

And he was still whistling to himself, happily if tunelessly when somewhat later he emerged to restock with remedies the shelf that had again been ravaged so mysteriously. . . .

Twenty-four hours had passed. Anxiety was still rife, if not rifer, in the Demopolis counterpart of Scotland Yard.

"Kick yo' brains in de slats couple of mo' times, Bugwine, an' see if you cain't git yo'se'f some action!" Columbus Collins again endeavored to rally his assistant human bloodhound to their rescue. "Keep on stallin' round





Mr. Fogg met them with all the warm cordiality of a bear with bunions.

between de ears, an' you gwine have to git yo' nourishment from watchin' somebody else eat. You done heard de white man!"

"*You* is de boy whut all time readin' in de detectin'-book!" retorted Bugwine.

At which reference Columbus' expression changed startlingly.

"I aint gwine sign no mo' confessions dat I done hit, neither!" the saddened Bugwine misread it.

"Who say you done hit! I had jes' thunk of hit, nohow, when Mist' Fogg skeer hit out of me, hollerin' 'bout dem other bottles bein' stole'. Whut de matter wid Chapter Twelve in de detectin'-book?"

"Chapter which?"

"De one whut say, is you cain't catch de crook, create one. Us'll frame hit!"

Bugwine looked blanker than a couple of brick walls. And for the first time Columbus noticed a peculiar clanking sound amidships of his overlarge overalls as he moved.

"Whut all dat say '*clank!*' when you moves?" he demanded.

"Frame who?" Bugwine avoided detours.

"Dat iron-fancyin' boy, Jeff—"

"You means us plants de ev'dence against Jeff on him? Frame hit on him?"

"Boy, is you git no dumber, you got to be wired for a signal system! I means dis: You slip in Mist' Fogg's store tonight an' git yo'se'f locked in dar when he close up. Den you git some med'cine off dat shelf whut's all time bein' robbed, an' plant hit in Jeff's coat pocket he leave hangin' dar at night. Den us comes along nex' mawnin', early, an' show hit to Doct' Fogg, right in Jeff's pocket. Us git de five bucks fo' cotchin' Jeff. After dat us eats, an' Jeff can 'tend to he own lyin'. Hit's so simple, even you can und'stand hit!"

Bugwine looked down a new vista that wasn't so bad. Then:

"Says whut all dat '*clank!*' in yo' pants about?" Columbus interrupted him.

"Aw, aw—"

"Splain de *clank!*" Mr. Collins was firm.

Reluctantly Bugwine drew forth from his voluminous garment a cause for fresh frenzy on the part of his chief. Only in time was Columbus able to get himself under control.

"Dar you is! Dar you is!" he raved when coherence became possible. "Numb both ways from de neck! How is us gwine keep de evidence 'gainst

Jeff straight when you do dat way! Hires you to hunt down de crim'nal, an' first thing you does is steal med'cine from de client! *Dar* de pain-killer dat ol' Mist' Fogg make all de rookus about! *Dar* one bottle de liniment! But whar at de ha'r-restorer? And how you git 'em no-how?"

"Gits 'em off de shelf," murmured the depressed Bugwine, "while Mist' Fogg turned round talkin' to you about us takin' de case. Done lap up one bottle de lini-

ment, and all de ha'r-restorer. Sho is taste noble!"

"Hold me, somebody!" implored Columbus thickly of the empty air. Then he saw light. The incident might be turned to account, after all.

"Gimme dat pain-killer," he instructed, in accordance with his inspiration. "And it save lockin' you up in de store all night."

"Huccome?"

"By us jes' gwine on down dar an' slippin' dis heah botle pain-killer in Jeff's lunch-basket. Den us'll show hit to Doct' Fogg an' git us de five."

But Mr. Fogg proved in a new mood. He met the distinguished detectives at the door of his store with all the warm cordiality of a grizzly bear with bunions, and dared them to cross his threshold.

"Detectives, are you!" he raged. "Well, fine detectives you are! Hire you two about *one* more day, and I'd be closed up! Cleaned out! But you're through! Done! Washed up! Get out! D'you hear? You're fired! Get out!"

"Wh-whut de matter, white folks?" stuttered the stunned Columbus from a hastily improvised dug-out behind a near-by barrel.

"Matter? Matter? Another half a shelf-full of my medicine is gone, that's what! That and—and—" He seemed to check himself, then resume his fury: "So don't you come back here again—not unless you've got the crook and the evidence right with you, you hear!"

Two blocks away, the Collins Detective Agency stopped running and re-formed to discuss the newest crisis to imperil their cuisine.

"Now you done play hell, aint you!" outlined Columbus bitterly to his helper. "Done lost de case fo' us! Done lost ouah five dollars! Done lost eve'ything!"

And before the dim-witted Bugwine could cook up a good come-back, he was interrupted by more trouble—in the shape of the sartorially splendid Mr. Henry Roebuck, proprietor and promoter of Roebuck's Remedy.

"Mawnin', boys!" the arriving Mr. Roebuck greeted them cheerily. "How de big clue an' footprint men gittin' on today?"

"Got one clue—but Bugwine gum hit all up," returned Columbus glumly. "Wuz dat boy jes' go to school couple years mo', maybe us could git him up to smart enough to be half-witted."

"Dat's a fact—all de time sleepin' in paved streets like he is," agreed Mr. Roebuck patronizingly. "Runned over him wid a mule wagon once my own se'f."

Bugwine fumbled at his bandages reminiscently. Henry had run over him—yet *Henry* wasn't wearing any bandages. Rather, Henry was in clover—while Bugwine was merely in a fresh jam with Columbus over taking a little medicine—in a couple of senses. Columbus, who was all the time hollerin' at a boy, too—

"Makin' myse'f some tracks away from here befo' I gits runned over some mo'!" mumbled Bugwine morosely.

"Jes' as well," giped Henry in the direction of the retiring Mr. Breck. "I comes here to 'scuss business wid you."

"Whut business?" Columbus grasped at a new straw.

"Hit's dat Jeff Baker," essayed Mr. Roebuck vindictively. "He cuttin' in on my territory—"

"Liquor?"

"Naw, med'cine. He thinks jes' beca'ze he got a job sweepin' out a drug-sto', dat he can sell med'cine in my territory round de Frisco depot. But I done scum up a scheme now to tie a knot in his business, an' needs you to he'p."

"Right wid you!" Columbus indicated his eagerness to assist. This might well fit helpfully into his own scheme.

"Co'se you knows about Gladstone?" continued Henry.

"How he gittin' on now?"

"Wuss. All wrop up in a knot, from changin' rest'rants. Doctuh say he aint gwine mess wid him no mo' twel Gladstone quit eatin' at de Bon Ton Fish Fry."

"Whut you got do wid dat?"

"Jes dis: Gladstone gwine be he own doctuh now—"

"Yeah?"

"An' he cain't make up he mind, on 'count old iron-pick-in' Jeff messin' in my business, whether to take my Roebuck's Remedy or Jeff's Baker's Brain Bitters. So he gwine put on dem'stration."

"Huh?"

"Dis way: First, say, I gives him a dose of Roebuck's Remedy. Den Jeff give him a jolt of his Brain Bitters—"

"Yeah, but how you gwine tell aft'ward which one hit wuz dat done him de good?"

Henry moved closer. His voice dropped to a confidential whisper. "Dat whar *you* comes in!" he imparted hoarsely, "—an' makes yo'se'f a dollar—in advance, now! Like dis—"

His straw hat far down over his limp ears in the wintry breezes, the bandaged Mr. Bugwine Breck continued to make such speed as his chilblains permitted in the general direction of away from Henry Roebuck. Henry gave him a pain. So did the places where Henry's wagon had run over him. And Columbus Collins was all the time hollering humiliatingly at a boy.

Unexpectedly he bumped into Henry's rival and Columbus' suspect, Jeff Baker. Jeff, moreover, was in search of a sympathetic audience. He had been wronged.

"Aint more'n git a good patient fo' dem Brain Bitters of mine," he complained, "when old Henry Roebuck got to butt in an' mess up eve'ything!"

"Dat de mainest thing Henry do," Bugwine rubbed his own bruises reminiscently. "Whar at you git yo' Rem'dy from, nohow, Jeff?"

"Dat some mo' my business," side-stepped Jeff. "Whut I talkin' 'bout now, Henry done fixin' gum up wid a cus't'mer."

"Huccome?"

"I jes' got a new one—Gladstone Smith whut make too merry 'mongst de fish. And befo' I can p'scribe fo' him, here come Henry tellin' Gladstone my Rem'dy aint do nothin' but make him wuss. All time knockin'! Den Gladstone git up a bum idea. He say let's make hit a contest: us both dose him, an' let de one whut do him de most good git him as a patient."

Bugwine's brow furrowed. "Yeah, but how you gwine tell which one *do* him de good?" he struggled.

Jeff leaned forward. "Dat whar at *you* gwine earn a dollar," he began. . . . And: "How about hit, now, Bugwine?" he finished.

"Been waitin' fo' chance like dis ever since Henry run over me wid de wagon!" accepted the bandaged Bugwine.

Following which events, there was a reunion—and mutual surprise—at the barbecue-stand of Bees' Knees, begin-

ning when Detective Collins slapped a greenback noisily upon its counter with: "Feed me twel dat's gone, or you sees de whites of my eyes!" Only to be immediately astonished at the discovery of a small bandaged patron alongside him, already in full cry after a bowl of Brunswick stew.

"Whar at *you* git no money to eat wid, Bugwine?" demanded his astonished chief.

"How come *you* got none?" countered Mr. Breck cockily.

"Dat," rejoined Mr. Collins mysteriously, "is whar you goes back to work fo' me. . . . How'd you like to wrop yo'se'f around fo' or five doses of *dis*?"

He displayed an alluring bottle of dark liquid, taking care to retain his hold on it. Anybody that showed Bugwine Breck a bottle of

medicine always had to stand between him and taking it.

"Boy, you swaller whut in *dat* bottle, an' you be sicker'n sevum dawgs!" he warned, holding it well away from the eager Bugwine.

"Aint never see no me'cine make me sick yit. Gimme!"

"You aint never took no ip-e-cac, den."

Something stirred reminiscently in Bugwine. He couldn't quite locate it, but when he was a boy—

"Huccome ip'cac?" he voiced this vague reminiscence.

"As my 'sistant," outlined Columbus, unheeding, "you now gits chance to squar' yo'se'f fo' gummin' up Doct' Fogg's case fo' de agency so us in a jam: cain't go back dar unless us got de crim'nal along; an' cain't catch no



crim'nal twel us can git in dar to plant de ev'dence an' frame Jeff."

"Aint gum up nothin'," denied Bugwine feebly.

"So," Columbus ignored this, "fo' one dollar an' other valuable considerations, us is done been retained by Henry Roebuck, fo' *you* to pour dis here ip'cac into *Jeff's* Brain Bitters at de ring—er—de bedside. Dat way, Gladstone git sicker'n ever when Jeff's turn come to cure him. Which makes Henry's Roebuck's Rem'dy de best med'cine—"

But Bugwine Breck apparently was suffering from a head-on collision of two irreconcilable ideas in the same head. His head! For he remembered ipecac now! It wasn't when he was a boy, either: it was scarcely an hour ago. Ipecac was what Jeff had just bribed him to pour into Henry's remedy, too!

Convulsively Bugwine's brain twitched, but it brought forth no fruit. Laboring over the situation merely evolved the more inescapably the fact that he was sunk—that both sides had him committed to opposing dark deeds.

And then, afar off in his mental darkness, glimmered a pinpoint of light. Since trouble was sure, he might as well—

Cautiously Bugwine shifted his bandages, and endeavored to look dumber than usual, by way of protective coloring. "Gimme de ip'cac," he signalized acceptance of his newest commission. "How us gwine git close enough to Jeff's med'cine to po' nothin' in it?"

"Dat easy," returned Columbus. "On 'count of us bein' off'cers, us is done been dep'tized to handle traffic an' referee de cure-contest. Us be all over de house an' lot, an' in full charge de med'cines too."

THE zero-hour neared. Hogan's Alley was packed, and Ash Street choked with a notable gallery. Ever and anon above the murmurings of the crowd rang the groans of that coming medical battleground, Gladstone Smith.

Then stirring cries arose of: "Gangway fo' de Big Bitters Boy!" And Jeff Baker, frock-coated and solemn, appeared, a huge bottle of yellowish-looking liquid, duly labeled "*Baker's Brain Bitters*," clamped under one arm, and a bicycle pump under the other.

At sight of Bugwine, Jeff took a firmer grip on the pump and signaled him imperiously. "Take keer dis heah bottle, boy," he directed with a wink, "while I goes in an' takes de patient's blood-pressure."

But scarcely had Jeff entered the sick-room when, "Henry comin' now—git dat bottle of bitters inside de other room dar, in front, quick!" Columbus was hissing in his helper's flapping ear. "An' don't git nothin' mix' up!"

"Aint mix nothin' up—aint need mix nothin' up!" retorted Bugwine cryptically.

But Columbus seemingly did not hear him. He was too busy making a passageway through the crowding fans for the oncoming Henry Roebuck, similarly armed with a bottle that bore the label "*Roebuck's Remedy*."

"I'll take hit, Henry, into de front room whar at my boy, Bugwine, lookin' after de med'cine fo' us," volunteered Columbus at his elbow, with a wink that fitted right in with, and confirmed, previous arrangements.

"Dat's right! Dat's right! Us sciumtific men cain't take no chances," acquiesced Henry. "Dat de patient doin' all dat hollerin' in dar?" he asked a friendly question.

"Sho is. Dem last dozen fish at de Bon Ton like to ruined dat boy."

"Uh-huh. Aint hit so! But Roebuck's Remedy gwine fix dat—if Jeff's aint kill him. Be wid you soon as takes Gladstone's temp'ture, now!"

And Mr. Roebuck disappeared into the sickroom, from which Jeff had emerged, with what looked like a porch thermometer firm-clutched in one hand.

Columbus seized the opportunity to enter the guarded front room where Bugwine stood guard. "Here's *Henry's* med'cine now," he whispered to his helper. "Don't you mix nothin' up now. I got git outside an' watch Jeff."

Then, left alone, Bugwine leaped to action. With his teeth, he swiftly worried the cork from not Jeff's but Henry's bottle. Jeff had hired *him*!

A crack in the floor beckoned, and Bugwine answered—with half the contents of Henry's bottle. Then, swiftly, he refilled it from the ipecac bottle Columbus had given him, plus the entire contents of the bottle of it that Jeff had provided.

"Run over me wid wagon, is you!" he muttered as he worked. "Holler at me out in front eve'ybody, is you!"

Then, a second too soon, Columbus was back. Bugwine was through, but he hadn't had time to police up from the job yet, which left him nervous.

"Is you do de job?" Mr. Collins questioned suspiciously.

"And how!" chirruped Bugwine cheerfully.

"An' you aint mix nothin' up?"

"Aint need mix nothin' up."

At which reiteration of an ordinarily innocent remark, a notion began to find lodgment in a corner of Columbus' mind. . . . Due to outside affairs, he hadn't been watching Bugwine as he should. Had he trusted him too far?

Seized with resolution, he broke for the porch, where Henry and Jeff were hostilely facing each other, awaiting the toss of the coin that was to decide which should minister to the suffering Gladstone first.

"Jes' a minute!" called Columbus loudly. "Craves time out fo' conf'ence wid Mist' Roebuck 'bout de ground-rules!"

Then Columbus was deep into conference with Henry Roebuck—one in which he whispered his fears and outlined his suspicions of the biased Bugwine.

"Is you foller me, Henry?" he concluded.

"I's done more'n dat—I's way ahead of you!" responded Mr. Roebuck. "An' de cure fo' a double-crosser is hair from de dawg whut bit him. You jes' leave Bugwine alone an' don't give him nothin' to make him suspicious. Leave de bottle of Roebuck's Rem'dy he been doctorin' right whar hit is; an' when de contest comes off, I jes' uses dis heah spare whut I got in my pocket. Always got a mess of Roebuck's Remedy labels handy, ready to slap on—"

"Let's go, den!" returned Columbus in relief.

"Who gwine dose Gladstone first? Me or old Scrapiron Jeff?" shouted Henry patronizingly above the chATTERINGS of the gallery.

As master of ceremonies, Columbus stepped forward and flipped aloft a dime.

"Heads!" called out Henry Roebuck, glaring malevolently at the reappeared Bugwine.

"Tails!" came from Jeff.

And the battle of the bottles was on!

BUT was it? For a new rift suddenly developed within the medicinal lute—in the blanket-draped form of that often-disturbing influence in any case, the patient. Gladstone seemed no longer passive in the matter.

"Too dawggone much skullduggery gwine on here 'bout dis thing!" he made his new views publicly known. "Done git me p'ticular about whut I swallers. I aint gwine take no med'cine widout I sees de boy whut made hit take a swaller of hit first. Is he git on all right, den I aint skeered to lap up couple of quawts of hit my ownse'f, to git shet dis mis'ry in my vest."

Detective looked at detective, spectator at spectator, healer at healer. There was a ring of reasonableness about the proposal.

"Jes' playin' into ouah hands, wid dat spare bottle of Roebuck Rem'dy you carryin' hid out to use!" murmured

Columbus to the newly complacent Henry. "Us cain't lose now: if Bugwine *did* try double-cross nobody, he jes' out of luck now—on top of bein' dumb!"

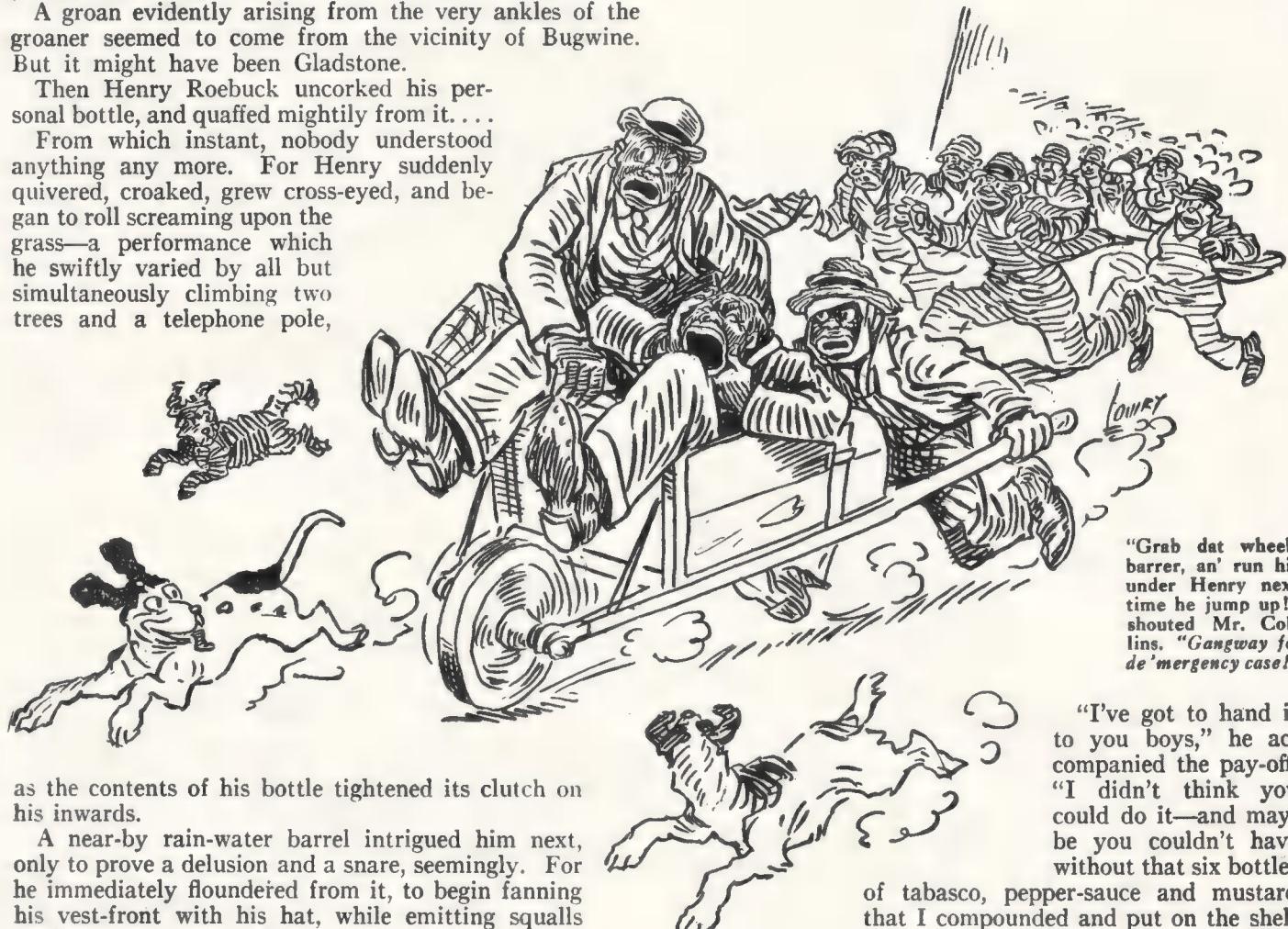
As winner of the coin-toss, Henry elected to accept first. Jeff, recalling his arrangements with Bugwine, was equally confident.

"Hit's a poor doc whut aint take he own med'cine!" proclaimed Mr. Roebuck. "An' always carries a bottle of hit right wid me. So drinks right out of dis spare whut I got in my pocket."

A groan evidently arising from the very ankles of the groaner seemed to come from the vicinity of Bugwine. But it might have been Gladstone.

Then Henry Roebuck uncorked his personal bottle, and quaffed mightily from it....

From which instant, nobody understood anything any more. For Henry suddenly quivered, croaked, grew cross-eyed, and began to roll screaming upon the grass—a performance which he swiftly varied by all but simultaneously climbing two trees and a telephone pole,



as the contents of his bottle tightened its clutch on his inwards.

A near-by rain-water barrel intrigued him next, only to prove a delusion and a snare, seemingly. For he immediately floundered from it, to begin fanning his vest-front with his hat, while emitting squalls similar to a tom-cat philharmonic in full cry.

"Git a doctuh! I'm dyin'! Git a hawspital! Git me de river!" howled Mr. Roebuck as he rolled in fresh anguish upon the adjacent greensward.

Columbus looked at Bugwine—and found there an astonishment equaling his own. Henry and the situation alike called aloud for action.

"Grab dat wheelbarrer yander, an' run hit under Henry next time he jump up in de air!" shouted Mr. Collins to his frozen-facultied assistant. "You done mess up somep'n somewhar! Us got to git him to Doct' Fogg's drug-sto' befo' he die on you! *Gangway fo' de 'mergency case!*"

"Aint mix up nothin'," denied Bugwine. But his denial was lost in the perambulant squallings of the writhing Henry, held in his one-wheeled ambulance by the frightened Columbus, while the astounded Bugwine strained at the handles in the direction of the nearest first-aid, the drug-store of their client, Dr. Fogg. Revenge was sweet all right, but this looked like an overdose!

Doctor Fogg gave them curb service—but in a way not to end mystification but to deepen it.

One look and two sniffs at the still-howling Henry, and: "Just hold him right there a minute till I get something," he directed briskly.

"If I knowed whut I *think* I knows—I'd break yo' dumb neck!" muttered Columbus savagely at the pop-eyed Bugwine, as he eyed the returning pharmacist.

Then everything that happened simply tied Columbus' intellect up in a worse knot. Bugwine's own brain had long since collapsed under the strain, leaving him in no condition to struggle with what came next. Which was Mr. Fogg, returning to proffer—not relief for Henry, but a five-dollar bill for Columbus!

"Grab dat wheelbarrer, an' run hit under Henry next time he jump up!" shouted Mr. Collins. "*Gangway fo' de 'mergency case!*"

"I've got to hand it to you boys," he accompanied the pay-off. "I didn't think you could do it—and maybe you couldn't have without that six bottles

of tabasco, pepper-sauce and mustard that I compounded and put on the shelf that was being regularly robbed. That's what your friend in the wheelbarrow here got hold of—some of his own stealings! But you carried out your bargain, and brought me the crook—with the evidence right inside of him! He's cured! And here's your money!"

It was late, and Jeff Baker, janitor newly restored to favor in the Fogg pharmacy, wielded a proud broom while he contemplated the discomfiture of his late rival Henry Roebuck. Thus lifted up and emboldened:

"Cap'n Ambrose," he began, "is you-all mind me gittin' some dese here new red labels of yours to put on de bottles of Baker's Brain Bitters whut I sells?"

"No, I guess not," acquiesced Mr. Fogg, "provided you tell me what's in your Bitters."

Jeff hesitated—and broke a rule. "Naw suh, Cap'n, I reckon I aint mind tellin'—long as hit's jes' between us druggists. I make dem Bitters in a tub in my kitchen, suh—out of rain-water an' old scrap-iron whut I picks up around an' leaves in de tub to rust. Sho is make a purty yell'er med'cine! An' good, too! After Henry come to an' runned off, I fotches Gladstone a fresh bottle dem Bitters—and dat boy done eat fo'teen fish at de Bon Ton a'ready now—and feelin' better wid every fish!"

Free Lances in Diplomacy

"The Man in Carpathia" deals with an amazing assault upon the peace of Europe—and the no less amazing counter-stroke of the Free Lances.

By CLARENCE HERBERT NEW

Illustrated by Arthur Lytle

CAPTAIN BARRINGTON of the Foreign Office had gladly accepted an invitation to dine in Park Lane with the Trevors and their two most intimate friends. Taking his cue from the subjects of conversation touched upon during the dinner, he made no reference to anything of a political nature—but when they were having their coffee and tobacco in the big library across the hall, the Marquess asked him what Downing Street was picking up regarding the general Continental impression of the recent aerial attack upon London by the six Carpathian gas-planes, and the successful defense against them.

"Opinion is practically unanimous upon one point, Marquess," Barrington replied, "and that is that your squadron of defense-planes, operating with no Governm'nt authority whatever, getting their tip of the raid—if they did get a tip—from sources entirely unknown to the Governm'nt, simply had all the luck from the start of that fight over the North Sea to its finish! The story Miss Burton wirelessed to the Daily *Bulletin* from your unofficial plane was a corking bit of journalism—but to anyone connected with the F. O. it left a lot of gaps. She described the search-lights used by your ships, of course—because they could be plainly seen from the decks of any craft on the water below. Her description of those enemy-planes goin' down one after the other into the sea, like living torches, was so dev'lish vivid that she made every reader of the news-sheets actually see it happening. But she entirely omitted sayin' just how you crashed those planes. The general assumption is that you got above an' behind them, doing it with machine-gun fire—boats on the water under you reported seeing flashes from all of the fighting planes. But if that really is the explanation—well, one has to agree with the Continental sheets an' the Chancelleries—you certainly had the devil's own luck—couldn't do it again in a thousand tries! Personally, of course, I don't believe anything of the sort. Your lot of scientists at Trevor Hall have been working intensively to develop some method of stalling a plane in mid-air—sending it down out of control. I assume that they've discovered something an' that naturally you're keeping the whole business dark as midnight in expectation of other attacks either from that new Carpathian State or from some of the bigger powers."

"The fact that six of our pilots came down in 'chutes and were picked out of the North Sea by destroyers or landed safely on French ground hasn't caused any speculation, you fancy?"

"No reason why it should, is there? According to Miss Burton's story, you lost some planes yourselves, presumably from their gas-tanks being punctured by machine-gun bullets. Naturally, your pilots weren't staying to be roasted to death—they jumped because there was no other chance for them."

"Odd that none of the enemy pilots escaped that way, don't you think?"

"How do you know they didn't, Marquess?"

"Well, we had our glasses on each of those Carpathian ships as it was put out of business—their pilots never had a chance to jump; we weren't giving 'em any!" said Trevor grimly. "After what their planes did to a third of the population in that Polish city we simply ruled out humanitarian tactics as far as they were concerned. We deliberately destroyed those enemy planes—can do it again, whenever they feel like going further into the matter. We had a patrol of scout-planes over a stretch of a hundred and fifty miles, north and south, along the Belgian and Luxembourg borders—warning us that the Carpathians had passed them a good hour before they were over Dunkerque. The news syndicate in which I am somewhat interested financially is maintaining a patrol of four planes at its own expense and will continue to do so until danger from Carpathia is rendered negligible, one way or the other. Beyond that, influential capitalists in Germany, France, Italy and Poland have arranged that the Lufthansa and similar aerial-transportation companies will at once report by wireless any sight or sound of a suspicious plane, night or day—such reports being broadcasted inside of ten minutes from fifty or seventy-five-kilowatt stations upon the regular S. O. S. channel. The Continental nations have been warned to listen for such reports. After that, it's up to them for whatever defensive measures they may have available. We are emphasizing through our syndicate sheets that the defense against aerial attack is from the air—not from the ground—and that it is entirely practical. More than that, of course, we're not saying—because when our defense is thoroughly understood, new methods of attack will be developed. I'm hoping that every State threatened by the Carpathians will at least take the chance of trying to defend itself by air."

"But we're getting a bit side-tracked from two features in particular which I wished to go over with you, Captain. Regardless of what Parliam'nt an' this Labor Governm'nt are refusing to see is threatening every European State at this moment, we know that Georg Lanescu—supposed to be at the head of things in Carpathia—is one of the most competent organizers living today. We know that, in spite of the utter absurdity of a tiny State with a total area of sixteen thousand square miles starting out with hostile defiance of the greatest world-powers, Lanescu not only isn't crazy, but he has some unknown proposition up there in those mountains which he figures will make him and his little one-and-a-half million population immune from successful attack. Perhaps he has suddenly become a visionary. But the fact remains that Russia and Poland each has sent in a brigade as a punitive expedition—and not a

man of them came back alive. Another fact is that both attacking forces found the country absolutely deserted, apparently—not a sign of human beings or livestock in the little villages—no opposition whatever until they had penetrated about twenty miles. Then lethal gas appeared to ooze out of the very ground under their feet, and they died where they stood. The various Governm'ts can figure this any way they please—but if they don't recognize it as the most serious proposition in Europe today, they're blockheads—that's all! Well, that's all the evidence I want as to Lanescu's organizing ability—an' it indicates that he certainly has given as careful attention to detail in placing mighty efficient secret agents in every European capital. The Carpathian agents in London at this moment, unquestionably, are trying their damnedest to get at the true inwardness of that aerial fight over the North Sea the other night—particularly, whether a tip of any sort was received by us and, if so, where it originated. Now there is a man in Carpathia—an Englishman, we suppose, though we know nothing positive about him—who warned us of that ultimatum sent to Poland—warned us again of the exact day when that small Polish city would be gassed, warned us a third time of the exact hour when those six planes left the Carpathian mountains to gas London, at a time when we were not expecting them for three or four days. Pemberton Blake, of the *Daily Bulletin*, was instrumental in giving the unknown man opportunity to communicate with him as a private individual on a certain agreed-upon wavelength, at a certain specified time. We've since urged that unknown man to get out of Carpathia any way he can before he's suspected an' shot. For the present he refuses—on the ground that he may be able to save some English or Continental city from frightful disaster while we're all trying to work out adequate defense against this sort of thing—also, on the more pertinent ground that he doesn't see how in blazes he can get out just now, without bein' killed in the attempt. If the Carpathian agents here do turn up anything which points his way, it means not only the death of a first-chop fighting-man who is rendering all Europe a service beyond any price—but the vastly more serious consideration of removing all chance for us to get tips which may save thousands of lives. Do you get it, Barrington? My two friends and I can go rooting around likely places in London in the attempt to spot those agents of Lanescu's, but you F. O. men are constantly watching the Russian an' communist lots—can doubtless spot the ones we're after in less time than we can. And, in all seriousness, Phil—time is certainly an object just now! Will you have a go at it—to oblige me?"

Upon Barrington's return to Downing Street, he found

Bill Galton—one of his intimate friends and one of the most efficient men in the Secret Service—in his private office. He closed the door for a confidential chat.

"Bill, I've just been dining in Park Lane. The Marquess seems to have the wind up over the Carpathian situation." The Captain then rapidly sketched the main points His Lordship had touched upon in their discussion. "He's not at all certain those rotters won't tackle us again!" he ended, with a worried frown.

The Secret Service man nodded gravely. "Well, he's dead right—they can't afford not to, after such a complete reverse as that aerial fight, because failure to do so would convince all the Continental States that it was not a lucky fluke—that Britain really has worked out a successful defense against aerial attack. Lanescu—if he's actually the man in the saddle out there—doesn't believe our defense will be as successful next time an' he's certainly under the added necessity of teaching us a severe lesson, if he can. Undoubtedly fancies he can—particularly if he takes every possible precaution against our bein' warned in advance an' has his planes approach from the Atlantic side. D'ye know, Phil—I'd give a lot to know just what that bird has got over there! The destruction of those Russian an' Polish brigades in an apparently deserted neighborhood sticks in my crop—nothing like that ever has been done before in all the history of warfare. The State is supposed to have a population of approximately a million-and-a-half people. Where are they? Where do they disappear to? You can't bomb sixteen thousand square miles with lethal gas or high explosive—there aren't planes enough in the world to do it in a single offensive flight!"

"And Lanescu's organization is undoubtedly well equipped right here in London. He isn't pickin' anything like the communist lot for his work, either—he'd select men an' women with brains. Any killin' to be done would be with a hypodermic—not with cruder methods. There's a woman comes to my mind—supposed to be a refugee from the Russian aristocracy, livin' very quietly here in London at Whalford's Family Hotel in upper Rintoul Street. Quiet sort of place—respectable neighborhood. She's known here as Marie Soyana—supposed to have been a Baroness in the old days. The two men most frequently seen with her were formerly Rumanian officers, but resigned to accept commercial berths in Paris. They frequently run over to spend an evening with her. An-



After being stopped a dozen times, Bloomberg finally bullied his way through to Lanescu.

other man and two women occasionally are seen with her at the theater or in a restaurant. H-m-m—I wonder! A few nights ago I was turnin' up the register at Whalford's—tryin' to locate a certain Jap, d'ye see—an' noticed that Madame Soyana was occupin' Suite 'F' on the third floor. Now, I've stopped there, y'know. Each pair of those three-room suites can be thrown into one large one by unbolting a communicating door between the two bathrooms. We may have our trouble for nothing—but suppose we take a taxi over there an' book one of those suites for the night—eh?"

When they reached the small but well-appointed hotel, it was evident that Galton knew the manager rather better than as a casual guest. Mr. Bremerton never asked him pointed questions, but seemed to have his own opinion that Galton was connected with the Government in some way.

"You and the Captain stopping with us for a bit, Mr. Galton?" he queried.

"Depends upon what sort of accommodation you can let us have, Bremerton; we've more or less business to go over in some quiet place. Have you one of those third-floor suites vacant?"

"I fancy we have—two of them just now—'G' and 'P'."

"'G' is on the side, isn't it—away from the street noise? I've had it before, I fancy."

Bremerton looked up inquiringly.

"Er—no chance of anything spectacular, I hope, Galton. One prefers a quiet life in the hotel business."

"Not unless one of us walks in his sleep—and wakes up in the wrong suite! But neither of us happens to be a somnambulist. In fact I think you'll find us among the least troublesome guests you ever have."

The manager grinned, and sent one of the pages up with them.

When they had locked themselves into their suite, Galton listened for several minutes with his ear against the communicating door in the bathroom. Then he took from his trouser-leg an umbrella-rib with a thin wire attached to one end. Shoving this through the keyhole, he pulled the wire taut, making the rib bend up in a bow on the other side of the door. Then he grasped his end with a strong pair of pliers, twisted the rib back and forth until the taut wire caught upon the knob of the bolt on the other side of the door, and shoved it back. Picking the lock with a skeleton-key was merely a detail; then he opened the door and they went through into Madame Soyana's suite. It was unoccupied, as they had been certain.

During the next hour, they examined everything in the suite—taking meticulous pains to restore each article exactly to its former position. They copied three cipher letters or messages in the pocket of a skirt in the closet, also a memorandum found between the leaves of a book: *C V P—Exp.*

On a table covered with magazines and pamphlets, there were the official lists of land and ship stations, and the list of European amateur stations issued by the Union Internationale de Radiodiffusion at Geneva. Turning up

the CVP in this, they found it to be the call-letters of the Rumanian Experimental Station in the Carpathian mountains, with a footnote explaining that use of the station had been prohibited by the Berne authorities until a certain dispute had been settled with Bucharest. Apparently nothing had been marked in the amateur list. Then, carefully examining the rooms to be certain they had left no traces, they adjusted the bolt of the bathroom door so that its end just grazed the socket, yet looked as if shoved in—unless one examined it closely.

Shortly after eleven Madame Soyana, accompanied by the two Rumanians, came in from one of the popular hotel restaurants, where

presumably there had been no discussion of anything political. When she had mixed drinks for them and set out a box of Russian cigarettes, she asked:

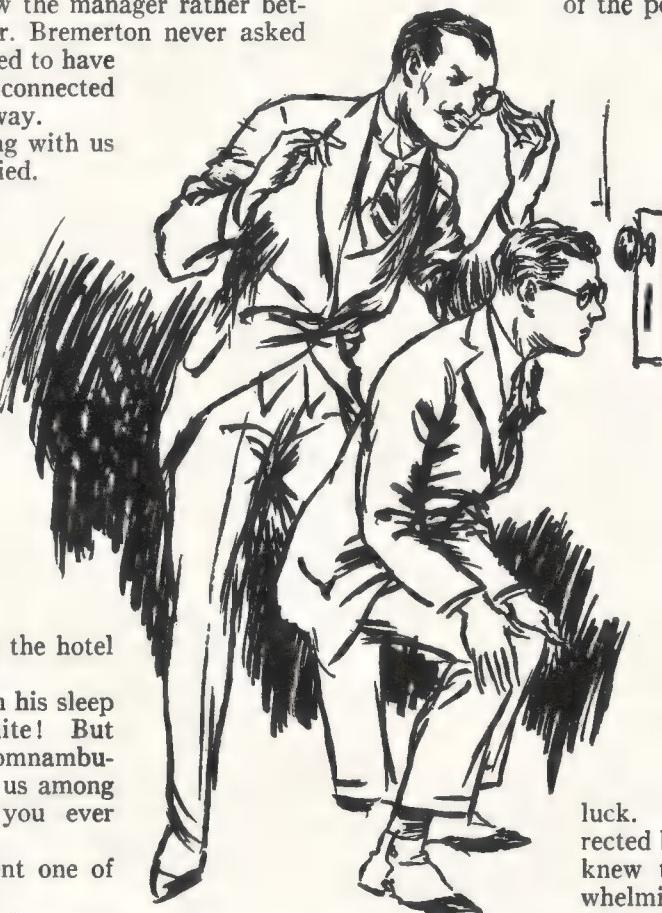
"Have you been able to discover anything since Tuesday, Stefan?"

"Not definitely," answered one of the men. "But I've a growing conviction that these cursed English—particularly that damned Marquess, with his meddlesome inventiveness and subsidizing of several exceptional scientists—have actually worked out something in the way of aerial defense which is entirely unknown and amazingly effective. It's all very well to say that his squadron of planes had unbelievable luck in downing our six planes. But there's never anything certain about

luck. Those planes of his were directed by a commander and pilots who knew they were fighting with overwhelming odds in their favor. Searchlights, for example—never before used from fighting planes in the air! Beyond all that they also were working on the certainty that our planes would

be over Dunkerque at a specified time. There was a patrol along the Luxembourg and Belgian border which reported the passing of our planes an hour before they reached the North Sea! How did they know our planes were coming at all?"

"That aerial patrol along those borders has been flying every night for a week—just an additional chance protection thought up by the Marquess. The little valley in the mountains where our planes take off is eighty miles by the most dangerous roads you ever saw to the nearest outside wireless station—it would take at least five or six hours to make it in any car. The President's wireless chief is the man who first called his attention to that experimental station up there and urged him to grab it—the man who negotiated for him a treaty with Czechoslovakia, providing an outlet for our goods and a source through which we obtain necessary foodstuffs and supplies which we don't ourselves produce. He selected his two assistants himself and has checked up on them in a dozen different ways. It would seem to me that any leak from headquarters in Carpathia is practically out of the question—nobody goes ten



They listened for several minutes at the communicating door.

miles in the country without strictly accounting for himself!"

"Are we contemplating any further attempt to gas one of these English cities?"

"Of course—probably this week. We can't let such a reverse as that of Friday night go unpunished—even if only partly successful, we must teach these English a lesson!"

"But what if *they* teach *us* again, instead? It won't do to risk it, Marie—we must know much more than we've yet been able to pick up! How do you communicate with Lanescu when there is an emergency? We have a station outside of Paris which gets our messages through."

"I've a man in Sussex—regularly licensed to use the amateur channels with five hundred watts of power. Actually, he has a fifty-kilowatt installment in a large cellar under his farm-buildings. I get through to him on a private telephone wire with coded messages which he sends out to CVP at once. He'll be listening for them at two o'clock and again at four in the morning."

"Then your next move—as soon as you know he's likely to be in that cellar—is to get a message through to Blomberg for Lanescu. Be sure it's Blomberg himself who takes the code. Say there's something mysterious and dangerous about this aerial proposition in England. Unless he wants to risk losing every plane he sends, he must hold off until we get fuller information and advise him. Let us know what he says."

AT two o'clock in the morning, Pemberton Blake—who had been sitting for hours in the editorial rooms of the *Daily Bulletin*, expecting a certain big story to break—came out of Red Lion Court, crossed Fleet Street and walked down through Temple Gardens to his own comfortable suite. He scarcely had lighted his pipe for a final smoke before there came a knock at the thick oak door and his servant Wong Kuen admitted the two Foreign Office men.

"I say, Pem—you've leased a private telephone wire into the Marquess' underground operatin'-room, haven't you?"

"He leased it for me—but it comes to the same thing; I use it freq'ntly. Want to speak with him through it?"

"Not just at present—though I'll bear that privilege in mind. Prob'lly at this moment—an' again at four A.M.—some amateur station in Sussex licensed to use five hundred watts will be broadcastin' with fifty kilowatts. Is there any way of locatin' that bird from one of the large broadcastin' stations?"

"Aye—locate him within a square half-mile at that distance, I fancy. You wouldn't know what station he'll be callin', I suppose?"

"CVP Experimental—big station in the Carpathians."

"The devil! . . . Two of our stations know those call-letters very well. Wait a bit till I get through to Devon!" Blake closed a switch on the wainscoting and picked up his phone. "Trevor Hall, please. . . . That you, Martin? I say! There'll be an amateur station somewhere in Sussex calling CVP betwixt this an' morning—fifty kilowatts. Can you give me a bearing on it? Aye? Thanks, a lot!"

After making the same request of the Wireless Intelligence Bureau in Whitehall, he sat chatting with his two friends for ten minutes. Then the telephone bell rang, and Martin said from South Devon:

"We're getting that bird, now. He bears exactly seventy-two degrees on our radio-compass."

In less than a minute the Park Lane operator had switched Devon off and connected the line with Whitehall.

"Are you there, Blake? Aye? We've just had that amateur bounder—licensed for five hundred an' usin'

nearer sixty kilowatts! Bears a hundred an' forty-two from here."

Blake took from a drawer a large map of southern England and drew a line seventy-two degrees from the Scab-bacombe Cliffs in South Devon until it crossed Sussex. Then another from London, a hundred and forty-two degrees, southeast to the English Channel. Getting out the Bartholomew sheet for Sussex, he noted the exact points on the county border where the lines came in, and drew them on that sheet in exactly the same directions. The two lines crossed within half a mile of Nutley—on high ground at the lower edge of Ashdown Forest. Next, he picked up the Berne Radio Union list of amateur wireless stations throughout the world and turning to the Great Britain "G" Section, ran his finger down the columns until it struck "Nutley—Sussex." Making a note of this, he went on to the end of the list—but struck no other amateur in that vicinity.

"Here he is, you chaps. Reverend Arthur B. Smith—Nutley—Sussex. G9HX."

"The Reverend Arthur! Oh, I say, Pem! . . . You've the wrong section or something!"

"Better look for that cellar under his farm-buildings, hadn't you? An' what'll you wager that his name wasn't originally Schmidt? Lanescu seems to have picked ability wherever he found it. Who'd suspect a respectable English curate of bein' a Carpathian spy communicating with a lot of cold-blooded scoundrels who actually are undecided whether to gas one of our cities this week or a fortyn't from now? At all events, you got your information just twenty-two minutes after you asked for it—which isn't so bad, all things considered. I fancy the Reverend Arthur will be gently discouraged from sendin' any more sixty-kilowatt messages to Carpathia—what?"

"There's but the matter of a fine, I believe, for usin' higher power than his license; but as a Carpathian spy—after their planes actually flew here in an attempt to drop gas that would have wiped out possibly a million lives in the more thickly populated quarters of London—I fancy there's nothing to stop us from holdin' him in the Tower even if the situation doesn't warrant our shootin' him against a patch of sunlight in one of the Norman doorways. We could put the Soyana woman and those Rumanians there also—but we'll learn more by keepin' 'em under observation. I'm of the impression that they have more agents in London than we supposed."

"If they get hold of anything which corroborates their suspicion of a leak in Carpathian headquarters, they'll get a note through somehow to Lanescu so that no hint goes through the wireless station," said Blake. "I told Blomberg he should get out of the country in any way he could—but hadn't said three words before he broke in with a string of Portuguese. The only way he could have known I understood it is his really being the man I suspect he is—we were in Lisbon together waiting for a revolution to break, some time ago. I replied in the same language—and he suggested our using the *Daily Bulletin* 'G' code as we talked. It's a foreign-correspondent news code which never has been written out or printed—must be memorized from some other chap who is expert with it. Anyhow—he gave me the impression that what he is discovering there is vitally important for the British Governm't to know an' he isn't permitting his own risk to be a consideration. I've been trying to figure how he can get out if he suddenly finds himself in a jam—but I'll be hanged if I see. He was shot by the Bolsheviks in Tomsk six months ago and left for dead—but he got out of that, somehow. Resourceful beggar!"

At a spot near the crest of the highest Carpathians,

where dense tracts of conifers conceal whatever activities may be going on beneath their spreading branches, the mysterious "Blomberg" was in the wireless station he had persuaded Lanescu to seize a few weeks before—when the provisional President of the new State hadn't supposed it could be put in serviceable order without expense prohibitive at that time. The skeleton-steel antenna-masts rose for nearly a hundred feet above the tree-tops—but would not have been spotted from an airplane without repeated observations through high-power glasses. Five hundred feet east of them a sheer precipice dropped twelve hundred feet to the tree-tops of another wooded tract which, in turn, stretched to the brim of a flat little valley surrounded on all sides by steep mountain walls of more or less bare rock. In this level valley, less than two miles long, were the headquarters buildings and some twenty hangars. From a platform on one of his antenna-masts, Blomberg could see with a powerful glass over the tops of intervening foothills to the low flat country which stretched away to the Russian border.

The two electricians found in charge of the station and sent down to Bucharest would have noticed several changes effected by Blomberg after he took the equipment over. The building was of reinforced concrete with walls eighteen inches thick, the floors and ceilings, twelve inches. The operating-room—painted with white enamel over linoleum cemented to the concrete—was thirty-five by twenty. The big black marble operating-panels, switchboards and receiving-sets had been moved from their original positions to the corner by the wireless chief's desk, where the nearest barred window opening was fifteen feet away—nothing but the solid walls anywhere near the equipment. The room had but two exits—the door at the farther end thirty-seven feet away, and a heavy oak trapdoor in the center of the floor as a fire-escape—all of the translucent wire-glass windows being barred. So for anyone coming in at the door, in full sight of the man at the desk, it would have been impossible to hear what he was saying in a low tone into the transmitter-microphone, or what was coming through the receivers with the volume-control turned down. In the adjoining generating room and all other parts of the equipment, there were but eight points at which the circuits could be tapped to get what was broadcasted or coming in. Blomberg carefully examined every one of these points two or three times a day. He had been sent to Berlin for two assistants, whom he selected carefully, and he checked up on them in many ways each day. They knew their work, were not concerned with any sort of politics, received double the pay they could get in Berlin, and they had the Prussian inborn respect for authority sufficiently to jump at their employer's slightest hint. On his own side, Blomberg was so unquestionably master of his job that he was generally respected not only by the people but by those in authority. He had driven a dilapidated car up from Bucharest at the suggestion of a British Foreign Office man he met at the Legation, who was himself unable to get into Carpathia but fancied his friend might do it. After being stopped a dozen times, he finally bullied his way through to Lanescu—in a little station of the single-track railway line he had seized—and after ten minutes of straight convincing talk persuaded the General to go up and take possession of the experimental station, putting him in charge of it.

When the station was in operating order—twenty-four hours after he took over—Blomberg locked the doors and drove down the dizzy, breakneck road to the little hidden valley. At the headquarters building he was informed that His Excellency was below, inspecting operations in the vast cave-system with which that section of the mountains seemed honeycombed—and was thereupon conducted to a



lift, which dropped him seven hundred feet to the level of the ten largest caves and their branching corridors or tunnels. After being directed from one group of workmen to another, he finally came to a vast cavern where tiers of apartments were rising against the walls on all sides to a height of three hundred feet. At a rough estimate, Blomberg calculated that that cavern alone, without any building in the open central space, would house at least ten thousand individuals. At a second glance about the place, he whistled softly in amazement. In the ground floors of all the apartments there were shops, many of them open for business and dealing with a large variety of commodities. Lighted windows, here and there, up the sides of the cavern, showed that many of the apartments were occupied.

Presently the General came over and spoke to him:

"I believe you said you'd heard some rumor of this in Jassy, Blomberg?"

"I heard a few vague rumors, sir, that you had some idea of starting something like a city of troglodytes up in these mountains when you got around to it. They said that when you resigned from the Rumanian Army as a General of Engineers, over three years ago, it was because you had obtained from the Queen Dowager's government several mining concessions in this part of the Carpathians and were then forming companies to operate them. Shortly after that, reports came down from the mountains that a lot of underground blasting had been heard—that a lot of tools, materials and supplies had come up from Czechoslovakia over that single-track line through the Dorna Vatra Pass, and that your companies were supposed to be working the mines—whatever ore you were getting evidently being reduced on the spot and probably sent out through Prague in marketable form. There had been legends concerning various caves in the mountains, but I don't think anybody outside even dreams of any such extensive cavern-systems as these. One thing about them strikes me as different from anything I ever saw of the sort—the number of chambers and passages upon practically the same level! Is there a possibility that some of these



"That village had been raided—cattle killed, grain burned, women carried off—until the people were desperate."

may have been actual mine-workings in ancient times?"

"Now that's rather clever of you, Blomberg! Yes—it was a reference I found to them in an old Roman palimpsest which started me making a tentative survey up here before I left the Army. Rumania, as you know, was originally a Roman colony, even before the Empire, I think. They must have obtained a vast amount of iron, coal, lignite and rock-salt—the chief attraction being that the rock-systems were largely natural and needed but little cutting to make them intercommunicating. Of course there are some twenty different levels that we know about—you haven't as yet any idea as to their extent. The more I explored them, the more forcibly it struck me that a population living in them—with practically unlimited water-supply from thousands of springs—space enough to manufacture anything and everything—would be practically immune from any attack known in modern warfare. The drainage is perfect—temperature doesn't vary over fifteen degrees in a year—ventilation is natural from openings on the highest points of the crest—lighting is merely the detail of generators run by petrol-motors or by the fall of water into one apparently bottomless cavern. For three years we've been making bricks from a large bed of clay high up in the mountains—cement from blue clay in the bed of two underground streams. Two hundred men, with the gas we took from the Russians, could defend every opening we've found so far from an attacking force of two millions, and do it without exerting themselves. With the blowers we have inside, it is impossible to force lethal gas into the caves—"

"But how about all the little villages on the low ground?"
"That was the obvious development of an idea starting

with one of them near the border and spreading through all of them. That village had been raided by Russians—cattle killed, grain burned, women carried off—until the people were desperate. I got a dozen of their leading men together, selected a substantial barn farthest from the center of the village—told them to dig down under its floor—excavate a passage big enough for livestock and small carts—leading away half a mile underground, with

a cellar a hundred by a hundred feet at the end of it, ventilated by a duct which went still farther. On the outskirts at the other side of the town, I had them dig a deep cellar twenty feet square in which a gas-tank, a force-pump and an electric motor could be placed. Three-inch piping, laid two feet underground, led from that cellar to various concealed openings in and about the village. Wires led from it to a small cellar adjoining the main refuge chamber—so the pump could be started and the lethal gas forced through the piping by electric current generated nearly a mile away. At first, of course, they could

only use the cellar as a place of refuge when warned of an approaching raid—the floor of the big barn being actually a trapdoor which looked both solid and heavy when in place. But they saved their livestock, grain and women—and improved upon my idea by storing garden-produce underground also. Neighboring villages were so pleased with the result that they began digging cellars and underground tunnels at once, until the idea has spread all over our State. When those Russian and Polish brigades were sent in, they naturally advanced along the usual roads—and we had provided the villages along them with gas. The result is known to all the world. Before another attack comes, I think we shall be equipped from one end of Carpathia to another. My engineers are working out other means of defense every week or so. In our underground airplane shops, we are working out new types of planes for specific uses."

"As I understand it, sir, this levying of tribute which you are now doing is a temporary policy by which you expect to be well financed—get all the materials, equipment, chemicals and munitions needed for your underground city—and compel respect from the great powers for your little State in spite of its size, so that when you're ready to settle down into normal existence again there will be no disposition to raid or annex you, or to interfere with your absolute independence. Am I right so far?"

Lanescu nodded approvingly.

"Almost entirely, Blomberg—that's just about what I have in mind."

"May I make a suggestion, sir?"

"Of course—we're all working together to put this idea across."

"Well—you're naturally antagonizing every State whose cities and people you gas—antagonizing them bitterly. But you're not yet self-sufficient, and probably won't be—you must have one or two of your neighbors whom it will pay you not to antagonize. Czechoslovakia and Germany are what I'd consider the outstanding neighbors from that point of view—providing an outlet for your manufactured goods through Prague, Dresden, Hamburg, and a source of such supplies as foodstuffs, chemicals, medicines, clothing, wines, tobacco and the like. Seems to me the right sort of man with plenty of nerve should be able to approach the

President in Prague and get him to sign a treaty with you along those lines."

"Think you could close a deal like that with both States, Blomberg?"

"Practically, yes—though I'm not so sure of doing it officially. You see you've provided me with a pretty good argument to use: 'Gentlemen, you don't want anything unpleasant like bombing and gassing, do you? What we're offering you is fair trade for a fair equivalent—paying and receiving payment in cash.' Yes—I think they'll agree without much argument."

"Very well—put your best assistant in charge of the wireless, and go down to Prague in the morning. The treasurer will give you all the money you need."

Blomberg gave another glance around the beehive in which he was standing—went over for a drink of cool beer at the corner shop, and came back to the General.

"Would you mind telling me, sir, about how long you've had construction going on down here?"

"About three years—several of the other caverns are much further advanced than this one. Step into my car with me and we'll drive through to some of the machine-shops and manufacturing plants. We started with a force of three hundred men—today we're using eight thousand, all of whom live down here with their families—don't go up to the surface oftener than once a week. You might be surprised at the cinema-shows and concerts we have here evenings. One thing we're beginning to need badly, but haven't installed yet is a well-equipped telephone system. Buy the equipment in Germany, will you, and ship it in as soon as you can—then superintend the installation. Might buy a dozen powerful receiving-sets, so that our people can get some of the fine broadcasts. In three months, we should have eighty or ninety thousand people living down here—in a year, possibly double that."

THE suggestion about a purchase of receiving-sets was a rather paralyzing jolt to Blomberg—but there was no evidence of it in his face or manner, which was fortunate, because the General's next remark subtly indicated that he might have been checking up a bit on his radio chief:

"Er—on second thoughts, I'm not so sure that the receiving-sets wouldn't be too much of a risk—eh?"

"Why, no more than there is now, sir. In the first place, all of your agents send in coded messages—they have your three official ones to pick from, and I keep the code-books locked up in that reliable safe. And nobody down here underground is supposed to know the exact channels I receive or broadcast on. Beyond that—well, probably five of six men among the crew of your lighting-plant know enough about wireless to build sets for themselves if the idea occurs to them. In fact, there may be several sets in these caves at this moment which you know nothing about. So I can't see that you'd be running additional risk by using general sets in each community as public amusement."

There is no point in describing Blomberg's trip outside beyond a brief mention of his flying from Dresden to Paris and back between two days—purchasing certain equip-

ment which he shipped in through a merchandising house in Prague—and making a telephone call from Paris to Blake, in which he cautioned him to do any communicating at two specified hours on two low-frequency channels—forty-two hundred and forty-eight hundred meters, in the bands reserved for fixed services. As none of the European broadcast receiving-sets are built with coils for lower frequencies than nineteen hundred, he was fairly safe on these channels at three and six o'clock in the morning.

Will James

(Photo by Curtis)

"Well, I'm home on the ranch," writes Will James in a recent letter to us, "and I've got everything all set and ready to go to work. I'd let all other work go so that I'll get the long story done in time and you can depend on it that it will be done. . . . It's sure fine out here. We had plenty of good rains in this spot, and the whole country is green, stock is fat and there's little colts and calves everywhere. But I sure won't be able to enjoy much of the ranch for the next few months only from my studio window. I'll be working on my story, and I'll sure do my best to make it stand alongside of Smoky or Lone Cowboy." (Watch for this novel in an early issue.)

the girls he considered simply as good comrades. There were three others, however, to whom he was merely civil enough to keep on a friendly footing—he didn't trust them an inch. The most dangerous of these was a handsome Viennese who was, ostensibly, Lanescu's private secretary. She began waylaying Blomberg whenever it could be done casually—and was undeniably provocative. But Blomberg wasn't putting his head into a noose without seeing the shadow of it. In a short time, this made a raging fury of the woman whenever she thought of him. One of the bombing-plane pilots had been for some time as infatuated with her as she was about the wireless chief. At first he was almost insanely jealous of Blomberg; then he saw that Elsa Bruenning hated the man, and he was ready with a suggestion as to a way in which she might get something on the wireless chief.

"The General thinks this fellow is a tin angel, Elsa; he trusts him with anything—but I don't! He's too damned smart! Now—here's a way for us to find out something, possibly. Mihiel Brabantu, in the lighting-plant, probably knows as much about wireless as Blomberg—he's built for himself a pretty good receiving-set—gets a lot of the music and entertainment every night. I think Blomberg may be talking with outsiders on the short-waves. Brabantu has the same idea and is going to build for himself a short-wave set. Then we'll take turns listening in and see if we can't catch something. If we do, you can take it to His Excellency—and that settles Blomberg! Do you see?"

While Elsa and the pilot were having this little talk, Blomberg was taking an unsigned code message which he succeeded in translating, and took to Lanescu. It read:

We are convinced that there is leak from Headquarters or wireless station. Advance warning is known to have reached Marquess of Lyonesse in time for his squadron to be at Dunkerque. Your pilots' lives depend upon spy being found.

"You had a key for this, Blomberg?"

"No sir—nor anyone else in Carpathia. Here's the original. Looked rather familiar. I recognized it as a code we frequently picked up while I was on a passenger-boat in the China Sea. When I got it translated I fetched it to you at once."

"Pretty serious charge! I know you don't give your assistants much chance, but how about yourself?"

"I've all the chance in the world to communicate if you like to believe that—it's up to you!"

The Bruenning girl filed the message when Lanescu handed it to her—read it, of course—and spent the rest of the day dropping hints, which quickly spread everywhere, that the wireless chief had been sending out information which had sent six of the pilots to their deaths. At first it wasn't believed—until the plane-crews began to get ugly over the possibility. Presently, one of them came to the President with a man from the lighting-force who said he had picked up talk between Blomberg and an outsider on a short-wave set he had made. That settled it. Lanescu didn't believe a word of it at the time, but they suggested that Blomberg be sent out with them next evening as wireless operator when they left to gas Liège in carrying out the Carpathian threat, and the President finally agreed—the understanding being that Blomberg was to go as far as the Belgian border, then "get dizzy" and fall from the plane at two thousand meters.

In the wireless station, Blomberg was getting this interview over a wire from a dictaphone which he had concealed in Lanescu's private office. That night, he got a message through to Blake:

Two planes leaving eight o'clock tomorrow evening to gas Liège. Will manage to go on one of them and try to prevent it. Hold pilot's license myself.

After carefully overhauling the cords and silk of his 'chute and shoving two automatics inside his leather jacket, Blomberg climbed into the plane next evening as he had been ordered—apparently with no suspicion that he was being sent to his death.

In the clear starlight he easily kept track of the terrain under them. As they approached the Belgian border, he knew that something was going to start inside of three minutes. He could see the other plane about a thousand feet ahead of them. Without moving from where he stood by the wireless equipment, he shot the mechanic through the head—there was a silencer on his automatic—and then the pilot—and jumped for the duplicate set of controls before the plane could swerve or dive. Opening the throttle wide, he rapidly overtook the other plane until he was close behind it. Then, locking throttle and joy-stick, he jumped—pulling carefully and evenly at the check-cord of his 'chute which opened out per-

fectly and floated him down through a mile of air. The two planes had crashed three seconds after he stepped off, and were pitching down in flames a third of a mile away. As he was winding in his silk 'chute with its cords, a large cabin-plane came down just behind him. Three men jumped out and ran toward him in the darkness.

"That you, Blomberg?"

"No! Bradley Ackerson—London Daily Bulletin. Who's this 'Blomberg' person?"

"My word! . . . Then it really *was* you all the time, old chap! We never were quite sure. I say! . . . Stow that 'chute in our plane as quickly as you can—don't tell anybody you came down with it! You're one of our party! Anybody from those other ships will be mighty unpopular around here—an' you want Blomberg 'killed in the wreck' anyhow—don't you? Safest way all round to play it! We've been talking with Liège for the last hour—saying we'd try to stop those Carpathians if possible. They've been fearing the planes would show up after getting that ultimatum—but hoped they wouldn't—an' are now coming out with a line of pickets to keep everybody a mile away from the wreckage. We don't know how far that gas spreads, but nobody wants to risk it. I say, Brad! . . . That stunt of yours beats ours all hollow! You cut your margin a damned sight closer than we'd want to—not over two seconds! How the deuce did you come to work it out like that?"

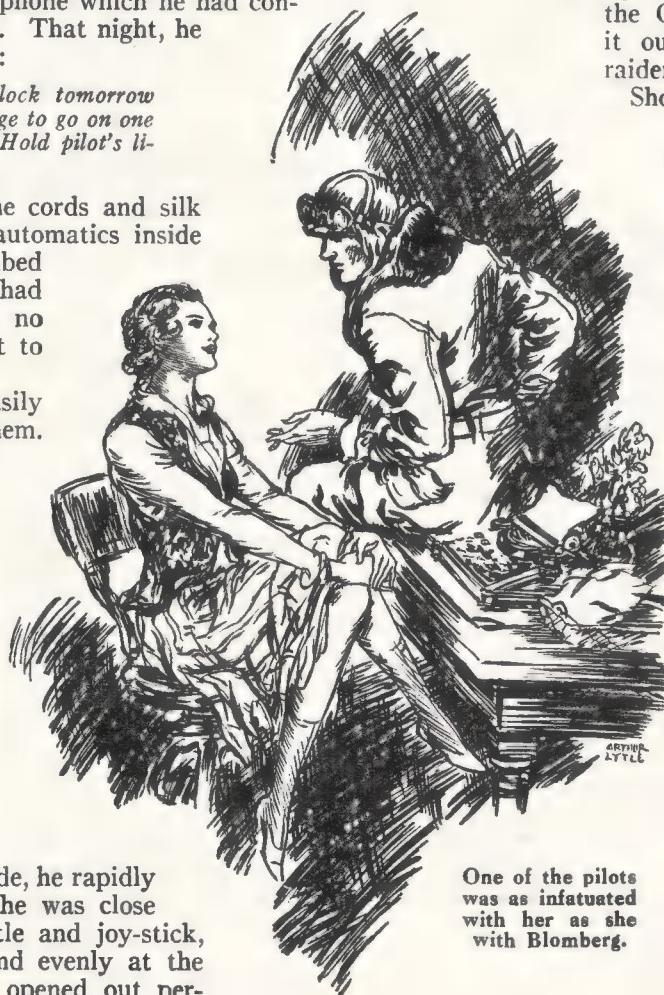
"Work it out! Why—dammit—it was the only chance I had! I was ordered aboard that plane to be deliberately shot an' thrown overboard at two thousand meters! What in hell *could* I do under those circumstances but kill my two rotters first, then drive the plane within three seconds of the crash, lock the stick and jump!"

"Humph! . . . One hopes that all of the Continental pilots may figure it out that way—an' smash the raiders first—with luck!"

Shortly after they reached London, Bradley Ackerson, Miss Jessie Burton and Pemberton Blake—all of the Daily Bulletin staff—were summoned to Windsor, where they dined with their Majesties and enjoyed a most wonderful overnight stay.

On the next List of Birthday Honors, their names appeared as Sir Bradley Ackerson, Dame Jessie Burton of the British Empire, and Sir Pemberton Blake. In the cases of Blake and Miss Burton, it is generally understood that they earned their honors by services in relation to the aerial battle over the North Sea—but nobody seems to have heard exactly what it was that Sir Bradley Ackerson did to be included with them.

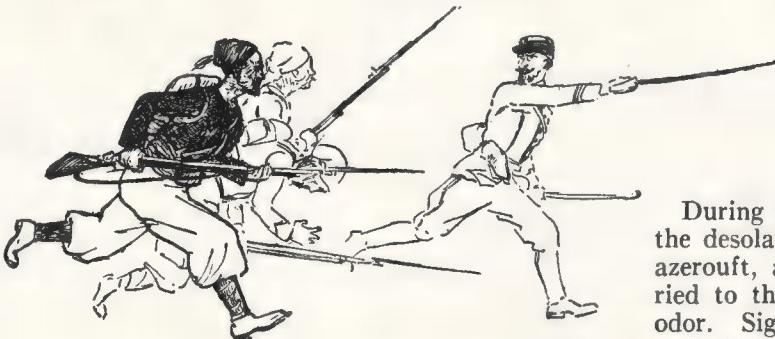
(*"The Defeat of Carpathia,"* another fascinating story in this, the best and longest-sustained series ever written, will appear in our forthcoming August issue.)



One of the pilots was as infatuated with her as she was with Blomberg.

A Soldier of France

IV—Campaigning with the Camel Corps



THE Hoggar Tuareg and their Ouellimiden adversaries were both mounted on fast meharas. Any attempt to cope with them as a cavalry unit was not likely to prove successful; to run horseback after camels is just as hopeless as to mount a bicycle in pursuit of a racing automobile.

Therefore instead of undersized Bedouin horses, we received the usual allotment of the famous "Compagnies Sahariennes"—two camels for every trooper, three for each officer.

Reliable native informers kept our command posted on the activities of the Hoggar *tobols* (clans); according to their reports the tribal leaders and outstanding headmen followed the advice of Moussa ag Amastane and were still within their camps; but several young warriors had saddled their meharas and departed without disclosing their destination.

It appeared very improbable that these die-hards, coming from widely distanced localities of the Hoggar, could finally band together in any appointed place without our scouts get-

ting word of it. Our commanding officers felt sure that they would find ample time to stop the Hoggar braves before they could get started against the Ouellimiden; that belief was based on their knowledge of Tuareg customs: veiled tribesmen of a single clan take invariably as *razzour* (raid) leader the most gallant among them; but Tuareg of various *tobols* who assemble to elect a common war-chief usually come to a deadlock which drags on for several days.

That happens because each tribal group keeps on sponsoring its own candidate as long as possible; the endless bickering is dictated by tribal pride, which is almost a religion among Tuareg.

We were still waiting for our informers to find out where the Tuareg were rallying when a group of the Tidekelt Saharan company led by Lieutenant de Sigourney stumbled on a gruesome find.

By ARMAND BRIGAUD

Illustrated by the Author

A French cavalry officer who survives fourteen wounds and a score of battles—in North Africa, on the Western Front, in the Balkans and elsewhere—has written for us his extraordinary story. He has told you of his baptism of fire in the Sahara and of various campaigns against rebellious natives. Here he sets forth the history of his share in a camel-mounted expedition to suppress a war between embattled factions of that strange people the veiled Tuareg.

veloped toes of the dead

That pointed them out as Ouellimiden; in fact, the southern Tuareg do not use, when riding horseback, regular stirrups like Bedouins and Hoggar; they stick instead their big toes into loops fastened to straps hanging from the saddle. In the long run their feet grow deformed, almost apelike.

But it was just as evident that their conquerors were Tuareg too; only Tuareg would despoil dead foes of every bit of clothing, leaving them naked on bare ground, and remove the hides of the meharas killed during the affray.

A second discovery confirmed this. Sigourney's men found a large common grave a few score yards farther: A cluster of broken shields and swords stuck in the sand heaped on the dead. A sandy rampart had been built all around, opening like a great horseshoe toward the east. Broken weapons and mounds of sand are the desert surro-

During a long patrol amidst the desolate sands of the Tanzerouft, a waft of wind carried to them an unmistakable odor. Sigourney turned his mehari toward the point from where it came; a few moments later he rode above a last dune and frightened a swarm of vultures which arose from the opposite slope like an immense spreading blanket.

As soon as the cawing birds left the ground Sigourney and his irregulars confronted the inevitable aftermath of a Tuareg victory.

About two hundred corpses and several carcasses of skinned meharas lay on a cluster of small dunes; there was no doubt that the dead warriors belonged to the Tuareg race; the straight noses, ponderous muscles and gigantic bodies were unmistakably those of veiled tribesmen; their breasts and shoulders were stained with the indigo dye of Tuareg tunics.

Sigourney was unable, however, to make out if they were Ouellimiden or Hoggar, until his second in command, Adjutant Casenauvel called his attention to the large overdeveloped toes of the dead

gate of the Hoggar stones marking the mountain grave of the Targui, and they are by no means as lasting, because the next desert storm will sweep them away, often uncovering the bodies beneath.

Following Sigourney's discovery, the leaders of the southern Hoggar tribes were ordered to meet near the Irecouman camp of Hassi Tinfelki, at the mouth of the valley of the same name, which opens on the Tiniri desert after winding through the territories of the Sekakna, Inemba and Irecouman Tuareg.

A strong array of French troops had been assembled there to impress them: three-fourths of the Tidekelt Saharan company, two *goums* (troops about one hundred strong) of meharists, our troop and a Senegalese mounted unit.

We waited a full week; then Tuareg *amr'ars* or chiefs of inferior tribes began arriving, followed by imposing retinues; they were mostly gigantic tribesmen above six feet high, with glaring eyes staring across the slit of the *litham* or veil, and tufts of coarse hair sprouting from beneath the turbans; many of them had blue eyes and quite a few red or blond hair, a testimonial of the western origin of the Tuareg race.

Their large shoulders and breasts covered by the blue *takarbast* and the silver-embroidered waistcoats which wealthy Tuareg display so proudly, swayed with the rocking motion of the meharas above the slender waists with a kind of feline grace; they were armed with single or two-handed straight swords, spears of solid iron reminiscent of the lances of the ancient Celiberians, and outdated long-barreled guns. They wore fastened to the left forearm the Tuareg *telaka* or poniard. Although firearms had rendered its use obsolete, many among them still carried the great square Tuareg shield of tough hide, decorated with shiny metallic disks and great St. Andrews crosses. Tuareg are lukewarm Moslems from the Sixteenth Century, when contemporaneous pressure of all the Arabian peoples surrounding their mountain abodes obliged them to accept the Mohammedan creed. Modern veiled tribesmen do not know that their ancestors were converted to Christianity by Nestorian missionaries, and that they had become zealous worshipers; they still paint crosses on their shields and mantles following an age-long habit of which they have forgotten the origin.

The arriving Tuareg invariably jumped down from their camels and came to proffer their hand to us officers, palm upward in approved Hoggar fashion. The touch of scores of unwashed hands was the most unpleasant feature of that rally. . . .

Toward the end of the following week a strange-looking man entered our camp at the head of a group of "Sahariens" or meharists of the Saharan companies.

He was a thin, blondish man with a long, thin nose surmounting a curved mustache and an ill-kept goatee; he had twinkling small eyes and rather large ears sticking out under the brim of his colonial helmet. He wore an Arabian burnous above a loose gandourah and red Bedouin leather sandals; his feet were bare and browned like chestnuts,

contrasting oddly with the ruddy color of his sun-shaded forehead.

I saw several veteran troopers snap to attention. A corporal barked to a spahi to go call at once Captain Guillemat. That suggested to me that the newcomer had some sort of military grade, which his appearance belied. Yet I could not locate him as a commander of a fighting unit; I thought that most probably he was a military surgeon, and I went to greet him.

The burnoused man slid down from his mehari and proffered me a slender hand; I was surprised that his clasp proved his arm was strong. The twinkling eyes darted quickly from my face to a group of near-by troopers; his lack of poise and evident ill ease suggested me that I was in front of a retiring, easily disconcerted man. I noticed he had neglected to mention his military qualifications.

"We rode as quickly as possible under the circumstances, but it took a few days just the same," he said with a resounding Gascon accent. "There is quite a distance between Ouargla and Tinfelki."

"Do you come from Ouargla?" I remarked. With youthful enthusiasm my mind went to the man who was topic of so many Saharan heroic tales, the man whom I had chosen as a living sample to venerate and to follow. "Did you see Colonel Laperrine?" I eagerly asked.

The burnoused man smiled kindly and darted at me one of his piercing glances. "I am Colonel Laperrine," he said. "Tell me something about your father. Although we have been corresponding all these years, I have not actually seen him since the time he left the army and married."

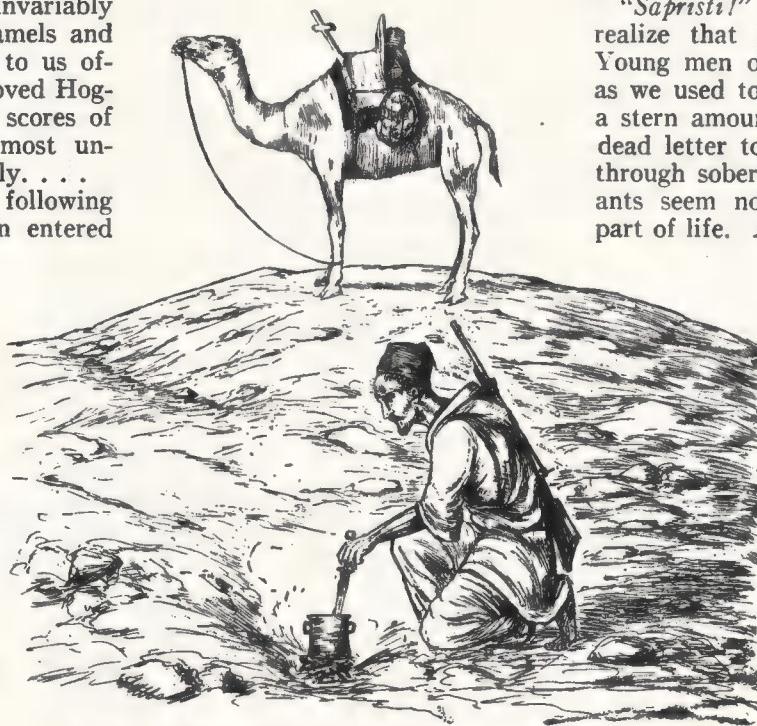
Laperrine was becoming better acquainted with me and his apparent shyness was giving way to the boisterous gayety which is characteristic of most southern French. "By the way," he remarked, "from your father's letters I gather the impression that he has mended his ways, that he is now a praiseworthy paterfamilias. Is that true, or is he still as gay a blade as he used to be in the riotous days of our youth?"

"Well—I don't think so," I replied, repressing a smile. I thought that I would hardly write Laperrine's comment to my father; my mother used to go through his mail, and her attitude toward wild oats, even ancient ones, was not a tolerant one.

"*Sapristi!*" Laperrine gayly said. "I realize that you are almost shocked. Young men of your generation are not as we used to be; they seem born with a stern amount of gravity which was a dead letter to us until we learned of it through sobering years. Young lieutenants seem not to care for the lighter part of life. At your age we were different;

take Foucauld, for instance: he is now a hermit, a glass of spotless austerity. But when we were together at the cavalry school of Saumur there was a widow—"

The advent of Captain Guillemat and Lieutenant de Sigourney interrupted Laperrine's reminiscences. I took advantage of it to look at the famous Colonel, trying to adjust his real personality with



A lone meharist scout preparing his evening meal of couscous.

the superman I had made of him in my thoughts. To speak frankly, I was rather disappointed; his record was undeniable, but nothing in the appearance of that great warrior and builder of empire appealed to the accepted conceptions of hero-worship; I had expected from him words of wisdom: he had on the contrary mentioned antiquated flappers and the skeletons in the closets of his middle-aged friends.

"Most of the leaders of the Imrad tribes are in Tinfelki," Guillemat said after the preliminary greetings. "Of the *Amenokals* of the great *tobols*, only the Taitoq Sadji is here. The chiefs of the Imemans, Ikerremoins and Tedjehe Mellet have sent deputations alleging that illness or other trumped-up reasons are confining them within their tents. Even the great Moussa ag Amastane sent his cousin Bou Chikka with the tale that he cannot come because he is shivering with ague."

"Moussa is a reliable friend," Laperrine commented.

"Then why does he not come?" Guillemat snapped.

"Several years ago, in 1903, if I am not wrong, I sent him a message requesting his presence, and he demanded to be excused, alleging that he was ill too. I overlooked his lack of obedience, and I never regretted it." Noticing that Guillemat stared at him with a puzzled expression, Colonel Laperrine explained: "The son of Amastane is a proud man. He had announced to his subjects that he intended to pay me a visit, but most of his men did not approve of it; only a small escort gathered to accompany him. Moussa would have preferred to die rather than come to me without the following of a great chief. Later, to apologize for that apparent lack of respect, he did everything possible to help my work among his people."

The fervor of a benignant, understanding intelligence shone on Laperrine's homely features; in that moment I understood the secret of his greatness—an utter disdain of exterior forms, of gold braid and domineering ways; his deep insight into the soul of the tribes, his efficient methods and extraordinary organizing capability had conquered one by one the obstacles that untamed Africa had thrown in his path, because he had not been burdened by selfishness or prejudice.

The meetings with the Tuareg deputations proved by no means peaceful. Time and again veiled speakers surged forward with glaring eyes, bringing their hands to the hilt of their swords. Laperrine pacified and scolded them so tactfully that they sat down again tendering apologies.

According to the centuries-old beliefs of the Hoggar Tuareg, the massacre of the Ouellimiden was just retribution for the ravages they had wreaked on the lower ranges of the southern Hoggar; Laperrine did not try to convince them that they had committed a crime, because he knew



We emerged from the ravine to a rolling slope and charged into the frightened rascals.

well that it would have been useless. He rather emphasized that the mission of chastising marauders belonged to the French, that the Hoggar warriors had broken their faith by launching a punitive expedition without French permission.

To enforce his words, he rewarded, amidst the dismay and jealousy of the others, the Taitoq and Imeman *tobols* who had not sent men against the Ouellimiden with a score of imported French cavalry horses and several rifles of 1892 model—a coveted weapon which the Tuareg prized above everything else.

But the master-stroke of Laperrine's policy was the solemn promise of all Hoggar clans to refrain from sending reprisal *razzours* south toward the territory of the Iforas and the Adrar, lands of the Ouellimiden. The scourge of a tribal war sweeping back and forth on the southern French Sahara was thus eliminated.

Tuareg are a people who seem ruled by uncanny laws. They take to some Europeans and savagely hate others without any apparent reason, and usually they follow steadfastly their first impressions: from the beginning I noticed that they seemed to consider me extremely friendly; the comforting feeling that I was welcome among them was bound to follow me during the various periods I spent in the Hoggar. Other officers more gifted than I in most respects were not as lucky.

The attitude of the Tuareg enabled me to mingle constantly with them during the couple of weeks of the council of Hi Tinfelki; when I first came to Africa, I was sent for a few months to the hinterland of Algeria, to Kabylie, where I learned to speak fluently one Berber dialect and a smattering of three or four others. The Tuareg Tamashek or spoken language is of Berber derivation and very easy to learn. From the beginning I found no difficulty whatever in making myself understood by the veiled tribes-



men, and was able to carry on a conversation of sorts with them. When the various Tuareg deputations began leaving Tinfelki, I had so much improved my knowledge of the Tamashék that Colonel Laperrine flattered me with his compliments. . . .

It was the night before our various units were to scatter over a country which roughly measured two hundred miles in length and half as many in width. The dozen commissioned and assistant officers squatted around a campfire; the rustle of the crackling branches mingled with the hum of the night breeze. The imposing ranges of the Hoggar surrounded us from three sides; their precipitous slopes rose majestically bathed with a velvety blue, and the silvery beams of the moon enveloped the summits with an eerie light. The immense, indescribable peace of the Saharan nights soothed us.

Most of the men whose faces shown so vividly in the scarlet glow of the fire had made Saharan history—like Sigourney, one of the most trusted assistants of Laperrine; Adjutant Casenauvel; the Corsican daredevil Vella; and the cool Merlat, who five years before had accepted the challenge of Inarti ag Seikous, the rebellious chief of the Ibotenaten Tuareg. Disguised as a Targui, Merlat had entered Inarti's territory; then the young lieutenant, who hid under a Tuareg *litham* one of the kindest and mildest faces that I ever saw, caught alone the ferocious Ibotenaten chieftain, who was a giant renowned for his skill with a two-handed sword. In the ensuing fight Inarti was killed.

Merlat stuck his own sword near the body of the Ibotenaten chieftain. Carrying as a trophy the two-handed weapon of the dead leader, he returned with it to the valley where his meharists waited for him.

But the one who interested me most was Lieutenant Freydeberg, a naturalized Frenchman who had risen from the ranks of the Légion. He was tall, blond and rangy, with an open loyal countenance disclosing a warm youthful enthusiasm which had not been dimmed by the years

he had spent carrying the packs of the Légionnaire. He knew fluently the English language, and spoke it with a marked American or Canadian accent which of course pointed out at once his original nationality; he was extremely resourceful in isolated missions, and brave as a lion. The tribes feared his bravery and skill, but they held him in highest esteem, because Freydeberg was never known to break his word, even in dealing with people who failed to keep their own.

The record and the presence of those warriors who had quietly emulated the daring achievements of quite a few legendary heroes created in me a depressing feeling of inferiority. When Colonel Laperrine announced that I would become attached to one of the Tuareg *goums* being organized, only military obedience restrained me from saying that though I had the courage to face cheerfully the dangers going with the job, I feared that I would be unable to carry it through successfully.

When we became drowsy and tired of talking, Colonel Laperrine announced that he would soon go to Ain Salah, and from there to Touggourt, with Guillemat's troop. This was bad news for me; knowing that Laperrine was a friend of my father, I had hoped that his presence in the country of the Tuareg would support my first experiences as a leader of irregulars.

"Are you going to leave us, *mon Colonel*?" I asked, trying to master my dismay.

"Unfortunately, yes," Laperrine sighed. "My four months' leave are almost expired."

That showed the real mettle of that great Saharan. After having spent most of his soldierly activity in the desert country, Laperrine had been transferred two years before to the Metropolitan forces, and he was actually commanding the 18th Chasseurs à Cheval stationed in Luneville. Longing for the land of his previous achievements, he had asked a long permission, the first in a dozen years, and had gone to Africa. In the meantime trouble had broken out among tribes which had been formerly brought under the French flag by Laperrine; the Colonel, invited by the Command of the Division of Algiers, had taken charge. Now that the Hoggar and surrounding countries had returned to comparative calm, Laperrine was going back to the French garrison of Luneville: "Where, *nom d'un tonnerre gris*," he mumbled with his Gascon accent, "I can't wear my sandals even in summer, when the heat is almost as bad as in the Sahara. Shades of Louis the Fourteenth's wig!" he continued, twisting his mustache, "is there anybody from Luneville in this merry group?"

It came out that, though quite a few of us had heard of that respectable provincial town and had friends or relations there, none really came from the residence of the 18th Chasseurs.

"Well," Laperrine continued unhappily, "the people of Luneville are honest, hard-working and eminently staid and conservative. To them the 18th Chasseurs, with its staff of officers, sons of well-to-do families, represents order, law, tradition: imagine their shock, horror, if they should see Monsieur le Colonel coming out of the barracks

wearing a *gandourah* resembling a nightgown, his bare feet shod in sandals! I know that they are right and I am wrong. I have lived too long among Bedouins; I have not at all assimilated their way of thinking, but I have grown accustomed to their dress." And with a good-natured shrug Colonel Laperrine leaned against a pile of saddle-blankets and stared contentedly at the saffron immensity of the Tiniri. In that moment the gifted Colonel little dreamed that another and fiercer desert, the Tana-zerouft, would within six years claim his life.

SIX months after the departure of Colonel Laperrine, I became, according to French military regulations, automatically a first lieutenant. I was at that time in command of a *goum* composed of northern Berbers who had volunteered for desert duty, and black Sudanese. The meharist *goums* were slowly supplanting the Compagnies Sahariennes, which had become quite a problem after almost ten years of priceless services. The cause of the trouble was a peculiar one.

The original Saharan companies were constituted of a skeleton of choice regulars and a bulk of enlisted tribesmen. The regulars were former non-coms and corporals of various branches of the service who had volunteered for Saharan service, and accepted the following conditions: resignation from their actual rank and engagement for five years; the duty of facing successfully one examination for the grade of sergeant after two years, and two successive ones for adjutant during the following years; to fail in those tests meant return to their original corps under a cloud.

Around this most reliable skeleton were recruited desert warriors of every sort. Keeping present the trend of mind of the Saharan nomad, to whom the restraint of a long engagement is intolerable, they were free to leave on twenty-four hours' notice; but they were also liable to discharge immediately if their services proved unsatisfactory.

Accordingly less than four or five per cent of the irregulars ever left before a year or two of service. A duty which they were free to renounce easily was on the contrary extremely binding for them, because it did not irk their proud spirit of independence. These native warriors were furnished with rifle, bayonet and ammunition, but they were obliged to pay for their clothing and two meharas, the money being deducted on their monthly salary until the debt was canceled.

That was a necessary measure because the nomad is very careless with animals and garments which do not belong to him. "Let the camel die, the uniform go to shreds; who cares? Name of Allah! What is that to me?" But if he must pay for meharas and clothing, his outlook becomes at once a different one: they represent his property, and if he loses or abuses them, he will be obliged to pay for new ones too, and therefore he takes exceptionally good care of them.

The "uniform" was in fact a good burnous, *gandourah*, two washable pairs of *serwals* or under-trousers, *chechia* and a long red sash, the only symbol of their soldiering, which they wound around the waist and diagonally across the shoulders. The Arab is uncommonly avaricious. During several small desert battles I often saw an irregular hit by a bullet quickly take off his precious burnous, fold it and place it in the saddle-bag, to prevent getting it soiled with blood—this before attending to his wound.

The Saharan companies proved for a few years very efficient. Less than eight hundred strong all together, they policed wonderfully a territory about five hundred miles long and three hundred wide, inhabited by thousands of fierce warriors.

The trouble started when the original regulars completing their term gained their promotion and passed to other corps, or were killed, and the demands of the veteran irregulars who wanted to become regulars and reach the grade of non-coms practically left no vacancies in the corps for whites, northern Arabs and Berbers. Not that the fighting efficiency of the companies was impaired; but among them the prejudice and hatred of their original tribes became rampant.

After a few years the white and Algerians finished their terms and left, or were killed; the veteran Chaambas demanded and obtained their places, and still other Chaambas became their irregulars. The companies thus became Bedouin units; when among friendly Tuareg or blacks, it was impossible to leave them out of sight without the unpleasant feeling that they would commit some abuse.

It is necessary to say that Laperrine had foreseen these evils and warned against them; the companies became entirely nomad contingents only after his transfer to France; from Laperrine came the most sensible advice: to shift the Saharan companies to Morocco. That was a good solution, but it was necessary to scatter the nomad element among the meharist units which were destined to take the place of the Compagnies Sahariennes.

The best available substitutes were Sudanese and Senegalese. These blacks understood camels and had an in-born sense of inferiority toward the Targui and the Arab. They were not likely to trespass the boundary of their duties. Of course they were not inured to fatigue nor individually as resourceful as Tuareg and Bedouins, but they were more reliable. Well-trained *goums* of blacks supported by a good percentage of Algerian Kabyles and Arabs of the north proved the best solution.

My *goum* was a splendid fighting unit. Every one of the hundred-odd meharists was a good marksman and an expert camel-rider, and two light machine-guns increased the efficiency of the outfit. A few weeks after I took command, I chanced to rescue in open desert a party of Tuareg which had been cornered by a swarm of murderous Bedouins. When I rode up to the Tuareg leader, who appeared unusually shapely and several inches shorter than the average Targui, a slender hand pulled down the *litham* or veil, and I confronted the sparkling eyes and the charming countenance of a most attractive woman. I had before me a high-caste lady of the Imemans, and one of the leading women of the Hoggar; when I laid my hand on her small hand, proffered palm uplifted in approved Tuareg fashion, I sanctioned a bond of friendship which from that moment gave me a most favored position among her own clan and the *tobol* of the Tedjehe Mellet too.

THAT attractive woman who scoured the desert at the head of a score and a half warriors like an Amazon of old, was everything in the world to Baikou ag Chikka, one of the leading men, and brother to the *Amenokal* of the Tedjehe Mellet, who are feared above all other Tuareg. The gratitude of Baikou proved so great that it became almost embarrassing—especially when he insisted on offering me a special bodyguard of twelve proved Tuareg giants, whom I was obliged to enlist with my *goum* with the uneasy feeling that they would give me more trouble than help, and a herd of goats and semi-wild asses for which I had no use whatever. But in dealing with natives one must be prepared for the peculiarities of their friendly feelings; and of course I had to reciprocate with the gift of a modern rifle and sundry other things which rendered Baikou more grateful than ever.

As a result I was presently invited to visit the Imeman and Tedjehe *tobols*—no mean achievement, because these tribes had up to that time grudgingly accepted French



Meharists on foot battling against the Air Tuareg.

supremacy but discouraged the coming of *liaison* officers among them. But when I was about to accept the invitation grave disorders in the southern Adjer territory caused the transfer of my *goum* to the zone of strife.

The Adjer is an immense forlorn country; most of its territory resembles dark seas of rocks frozen to stillness by an unearthly power; in a way it is a no-man's land of the Saharan nomads. Placed as it is midway from the Hoggar and the Senoussi oases of Ghat and Murzuk, which at that time were only nominally under Italian control, and parted by a stretch of desert sands from the Air, country of negritic Tuareg, the Adjer is scoured by minor clans and raiding parties of warriors of those three tribes.

Up to that moment the nomads had kept on fighting each other; but all of a sudden swift raids of mingled Senoussi Arabs, white-caped Airs and renegade Hoggar Tuareg under Senoussi influence struck against our isolated platoons and units of meharists, inflicting serious losses. . . .

A few days of swift camel-riding brought us to the very heart of the Adjer country, where we arrived almost simultaneously with other *goums* coming from the Great Erg and the Erg Eydeien deserts. All together we constituted a sizable force. Our orders were to comb the Adjer country, trying to cut the marauding bands from their eastern and southern sources of reinforcements.

At that time my second in command was Adjutant Chateauredgen, formerly of the spahis. Chateauredgen was brave, able and passably cultured, having gone through high school and two years of Lyceum before enlisting; he had all the qualifications entitling him to the promotion to second lieutenant except a most important one: the possibility of dealing with people and carrying on his duty without being unduly influenced by unjustified likes and dislikes.

Many years before, while he was on duty near Fort National in Kabilye, Chateauredgen had interfered when a Beni Youssi had mistreated his saffron-skinned wife in his presence, and had received a painful knife-wound as a reward. Since that time his antipathy toward all Berbers and Berber-speaking people had become with him a kind of mild insanity, which the loneliness and sun of the Sahara had rendered worse with the passing of every

year. In spite of his absurd attitude, Chateauredgen was too good a soldier to treat less than fairly the Berbers and Tuareg of our *goum*, but he did not trust them; he was ever inclined to place his confidence in the blacks, who, poor fellows, had more good will than brain.

The itinerary of advance assigned to our *goum* passed through a locality called Netremid, which was marked down as the crumbling mausoleum of a holy *mrabet* located near two wells and a few palm trees grouped on the sandy bottom of a narrow gorge. Saharan nomads constantly gravitate around the few and widely distanced watering places of their sun-baked land; I had a strong feeling that near Netremid we would encounter some of the marauders who scoured the Adjer.

When at length a half-day of mehari-travel distant from that place, destiny took a hand. We had stopped for our noon meal; tired of the Saharan staple food, cheese and dates, I decided to open one of the very few tins of preserved beef we carried with us. As soon as I began eating of it, I noticed a queer rusty taste; but just the same the meat seemed good after so many days on dry dates and *tikadnarin*, an extremely hard and pungent cheese considered a great delicacy by Tuareg, which I sincerely detested.

While we ate, Chateauredgen took me into his confidence. He told me that he was at last convinced that in his own present state he had no future whatever. He had a small estate in his native Bretagne, and he had saved his entire salary for several years.

"With my savings I will buy a farm," he said in his slow, dogged way. "I will make the estate pay, and the small pension I get will help matters. *Mon lieutenant*, I am barely forty years old; I can very well marry and raise a family of my own. I will soon submit my resignation. I beg of you, *mon lieutenant*, to forward it with a favorable opinion."

"Of course I will," I cordially promised.

About an hour later, when we mounted on our camels, I was racked by a fierce stomachache. I realized at once that the tinned meat I had eaten was in poor condition; I instantly swallowed some cognac from my medicinal kit, and tried to clear my stomach as Nero used to when he

wanted to begin banqueting anew. It was the only thing I could do under the circumstances, and perhaps it saved my life, but for the time being I did not feel any better.

However, our men and meharas alike needed water, for our liquid rations were almost gone, and it was needful to place the interests of the service ahead of my own. I ordered my orderly to strap me to the saddle to prevent a fainting spell making me tumble to the sand while the troop was in motion. I placed Chateaureden in charge, and almost instantly I drifted to a semiconscious, torturing condition which the motion of the mehari rendered worse with the passing of every minute.

WE reached our destination at sunset. With eyes dimmed by fever and pain, I perceived a rough wall, crumbling in several points, thrown in a rambling way around two round wells and a lone palm. Two other palms had died and lay in the middle of the inclosure. The dry, ragged bunches of leaves stood covered with dust, close to the ground.

The mausoleum of the ancient *mrbet*, whose name had been forgotten, was a squat, frayed structure about four yards high, conspicuous on a flat stretch of sand ten or fifteen yards away from the southern corner of the wall. These ungainly structures and that lone palm had an almost sinister appearance, bathed as they were in the red light of sunset, with the shadows of the surrounding gloomy slopes spreading fast to engulf the valley.

Then, with the sudden passage from light to darkness peculiar to tropical Africa, night was suddenly around us—a dark, moonless night, rendered the more oppressive by the black mass of the near-by hills which shut out all wafts of wind.

I was too far spent to interfere with Chateaureden's orders. I was gently laid on a cot under a hastily pitched tent; the noises of the bivouac, the bleating and munching of the camels, came to my feverish brain like from a distance; I closed my eyes, hoping that sleep would come with its blessed oblivion. And in the meantime the *goum* settled for the night around the wells and the lone palm, within the rough square surrounded by the thick, squat wall, which provided a shelter against bullets but no obstacle worth mentioning to an attacking party.

The quarters of our troop thus constituted a good defensive system only on condition that far-flung scouts should warn of an approaching force of marauders before the latter could reach the wall; otherwise they would become something like a glorified rat-trap. Knowing that we had to deal with dissident Tuareg and Airs, past-masters of surprise attacks, Chateaureden decided to throw around the camp two cordons of a dozen men each, one at two hundred and the other at fifty yards from the wall.

Up to that moment he had done the right thing; that system of guards was ample to ward off any surprise, to give timely warning and eventually engage the enemy for the split minute necessary to waken the *goum*. But, true to his prejudice and overlooking the furious mumbles of the Berber sergeants, Chateaureden sent out as guards only black corporals and privates. My Tuareg recruits, who were the most skilled Saharans of the outfit, saw at once the adjutant's blunder; they volunteered to go out on guard too, but they were ordered to mind their business.

Chateaureden can't be entirely blamed, for in ordinary circumstances our blacks were most efficient in every kind of duty; but in Netremid they had to cope with two overwhelming factors: the one was the peculiar Tuareg skill of advancing, taking advantage of every asperity of the ground, as hard to detect as the American Indians of old, a skill which blacks can't hope to emulate. The other was their inborn superstition.

North African blacks are firmly convinced that desert and mountains alike are scoured at night by all kinds of ghosts and evil spirits. Military discipline hammers down that feeling to some extent, but the neighborhood of an ancient tomb and a sinister-looking place like Netremid were a rather difficult test, likely to revive that fear of the supernatural which is among primitive peoples more overpowering than actual danger. Thus step by step, frightened by shapeless forms which existed only in their imagination, the guards crawled back closer and closer to the wall, and their effectiveness as far-flung outposts had ceased to exist. . . .

Toward midnight I finally fell asleep. Sometime later I confusedly heard several crashing reports of firearms, yells and shouts. I was so tired, and I enjoyed so much that first period of rest in several hours, that I tried to fall asleep again, with a hope that I had not heard actual rifle-shots but dreamed of it.

But suddenly the flap of the tent acting as a door was thrown open; tall Corporal Subeni appeared framed in the entrance, his tunic a light patch against the darkness of the night, his eyeballs shining white in his coal-black face.

"Sidi Lieutenant!" he shouted. "El Tuareg! El Tuareg are here!" Then he wheeled about and fired his revolver rapidly at a foe that I was unable to see.

I jumped to my feet, swayed dazedly in the darkness of the tent, and fell on my cot again. Calling upon all my will-power and strength, I arose again, groped for my belt, fastened it and slid the gun holster in front of me. I got hold of my sword, unsheathed it and emerged unsteadily from the tent.

My eyes, accustomed to the greater darkness of the tent, were able to perceive at once groups of fighting men tearing at each other all over the inclosure, and great white-capped forms leaping continuously over the wall and rushing to join the affray. I shouted an order to rally; the sound of my voice instantly attracted against me two warriors. I was burning with fever; and I felt a rumbling humming in my ears; and my legs were none too steady. For a split second I thought my last moment had arrived.

THEN suddenly I saw one of our Tedjehe Mellet leap on the foremost aggressor; that very action seemed to galvanize all my strength; by sheer instinct I raised my sword in the second parrying position, caught on it a great blow of a two-handed sword. I felt my blade snap, but its slanting angle caused the Air weapon to slide clear of my left shoulder. The few days of hand-to-hand fighting I had experienced under Mangin in the Atlas had given me a precious lesson: clenching tightly my broken weapon, I sprang at my aggressor, caught a furious blow with the pommel of his sword on my mouth, and slashed at his mid-section with a furious upward thrust.

The Air collapsed, and I stood swaying over him, blood flowing from my mouth down to my breast; I felt several front teeth loosened; I pulled away one which hung unsteadily to a shred of gum; and with a strangled, lisping voice, I shouted the *goumières* to rally. A dozen soldiers heard, broke loose from the tribesmen with whom they were engaged, and repeated the order at the top of their lungs; on the opposite corners, and in the center, near the wells, two sergeants were rallying other groups too.

With the instinctive knowledge of seasoned warriors, the two non-coms converged with their men on the group which had collected around me. In a quick, slashing fight, gaining yard after yard with a series of rushes and the use of cold steel, they cut down the marauders who stood among us. A few moments later I found myself with most of the *goum* well in hand.

But the inclosure swarmed with white-caped Air tribes-



Ouellimiden Tuareg in combat with single Hoggar Tuareg.

men jumping on us from every side, closing in on other meharists who fought pell-mell among them. I realized clearly that we had nothing to gain in the pursuit of a disorderly mêlée. The first thing to do was to make out the side from where our aggressors were coming; as soon as I localized that I led the meharists toward the opposite side of the wall.

Our concerted charge was a successful one; we knocked down, trampled and stabbed a score of yelling Airs, who surged sword in hand to stop us, cleared half that rough yard from the enemy, and in so doing we disentangled another couple dozen of *goumiers*. Panting, we stopped close to the wall and faced the enemy. . . .

There was a lull in the fighting, and that gave me a chance to notice another major problem confronting us. Our meharas, tethered all over the courtyard, were being shot down by stray bullets; or bleating dismally, they tried to tear frantically at their stout pickets; we were running the risk of losing the greater part of our mounts; in the Adjer, as in the Sahara desert, that almost means doom.

It was vital that we should transfer the fighting to some other place, because the increasing numbers of our adversaries made it clear that we could not overcome them easily and speedily.

I had about seventy men with me, part of them composing the remainder of the half-*goum* commanded by my top sergeant, Kerib el Youss. I pulled Kerib close to me, and whispered to him hurried instructions; Kerib nodded and darted among the meharists lined up right and left of us.

Ere long the men of his own command formed a line in front of the rest; shoulder to shoulder, they fired point-blank and hacked furiously at the scattered Airs, who rushed pell-mell against them. Under cover of that embattled group I led the rest above the wall.

We swiftly ran to a near-by ravine, where we took cover. My plan was to lead the men in a wide circle, to fall on the shoulders of our attackers. I had two objectives in view: first of all, I hoped that the surprise attack and the disconcerting fact of suddenly finding themselves hemmed in between two bodies of soldiers would rout the enemy; second, in the event that the Airs should not lose courage, I felt sure that they would rush out of the inclosure, be-

cause when odds become unfavorable, tribesmen do not relish to fight within walls. Although not as favorable as the first alternative, this second one would at the least save our mounts and give us a chance to use our firearms more effectively.

But efficiently to carry out either of those purposes, it was vital that we should first reconnoiter, to avoid falling blindly into some large enemy group lurking in the immediate neighborhood. I was going to send a couple of soldiers out as scouts, when I heard a rustling sound among the bushes in front of us. Before I could aim my gun or shout a challenge, I heard a discreet cough and the deep rumbling of the voice of the Tedjehe Keradji.

"Are you there, Keradji?" I asked in undertone, to make sure I was dealing with that stalwart friend.

"Ourgh, Sidi," the Tuareg replied, emerging from within the thick shrubbery. With uncommon gladness I saw that he was followed by his fellow Tedjehe swordsmen. That was indeed luck, because in hand-to-hand encounters the support of a few Tedjehe Mellet Tuareg is a most beneficial thing. Keradji began speaking rapidly:

"We were in a different corner of the *kasbah* when we saw you jumping out of the inclosure. We understood that you were going out for a purpose, so we tore free of the men fighting with us and we jumped out of the *kasbah* too. We foresaw where you had gone, and we ran to this ravine unseen by the Airs, because we ran crouching taking advantage of the shadows and asperities of the ground. What do you wish to do now, Sidi?"

I told him what was my plan. In the dim light I saw Keradji's eyes glare across the slit of the *litham* and his shoulders jerk impatiently. "Ai, Sidi, perhaps your attack will fall on a few scattered Airs, and it will do little harm to our enemies. Worse, it will warn them that part of your men left the *kasbah*; if they will rush out and engage your *askari* in the deceiving darkness, what will the black soldiers do? They don't know this ground; they will fall, break their knees, and the Airs will lop off their heads while they try to arise again."

"Why not go after the Airs' meharas? The Airs saw that they will not conquer easily the *kasbah*. If they learn that while they are struggling here some one is stealing their mounts, they will rush back to save the camels.

We will intercept them on the way, and slay them at our leisure. Ai, Sidi, it is easily done."

It was a good plan indeed. So, telling Keradji to lead the way, we followed warily. . . .

The Tuareg led on unhesitatingly. We advanced perforce slowly, close to the ground to escape detection. To our left and going in the opposite direction, we heard the quick padding of the feet of Air warriors who still flowed toward the inclosure. The bedlam of shouts and reports of firearms coming from there was deafening. At length we made out clearly bleatings of camels. Keradji led on a few more paces, then half arose from his crouching position, motioned us to stop.

"Sidi," he whispered close to my ear, "they are on a saddle of the ground fifty or sixty paces in front of us. Wait here with the *askari* while I reconnoiter with the others."

I consented, knowing that it was the best thing to do. They ran onward, stooping and following the irregularities of the ground with a skill of animals of the wilderness rather than humans; their system was so perfect that after a few lunges they seemed to melt into the ground and disappear.

Four or five anxious minutes passed; suddenly we heard a blood-curdling screech, followed by a scattered volley and a brief uproar of voices, then a leaden silence.

"Let's hope they did not slaughter our friends!" I thought, snapping out an order. The meharists fell into a double line, rifles ready; we advanced quickly, peering anxiously in the darkness in front of us.

A tall, dark shape seemed to sprout from the ground, arm uplifted.

"Who goes there?" I shouted.

"It is I, Keradji. The Airs had gone, leaving ten guards. We dispatched them. We found two hundred choice meharas and booty. It is a great *razzour!* Come to feast your eyes, Akbar; I lead the way."

I followed him, and soon came in sight of the camels, tethered at the bottom of a shallow ravine. The white-caped bodies of a few dead Airs loomed on the ground in front of them. The stolid beasts had quieted down after an attempt to stampede during the brief fight which had annihilated their guards. They kept on munching, indifferent to the change of masters.

A Tedjehe Mellet who had remained behind as a lookout came on the run. "The Airs are returning. Get ready for them!" he warned breathlessly.

WE took places behind a low ridge which was a natural trench. During the scuffle near the mausoleum one machine-gun had been irreparably damaged. The other we had brought with us, because Kerib had no chance to use it, crammed as he was almost on top of the Airs, with danger of bullets hitting the other side of the wall and ricochetting on his meharists.

That machine-gun was now carefully aimed on the uneven ground in front of us. The meharists took places to the right and left of it; the Tedjehe stood behind clenching their heavy swords.

Ere long we heard the pounding of several feet; evidently some of those who guarded the camels had escaped unnoticed by the Tedjehe and gone to give the alarm; the Airs had heard that the ones who were raiding their camels were blue-caped Hoggar Tuareg. That was not extraordinary, because the Adjer is a land where marauder preys on marauder; and unfortunately for them, they did not surmise that these Hoggar Tuareg were connected with us.

Accordingly the negritic Tuareg came in a compact mass, brandishing their swords; but instead of meeting the

swordplay of other tribesmen, they found themselves raked by machine-gun- and rifle-fire.

The shock and the surprise which gripped them was so great that they stopped and stood massed for a few moments a couple of score yards away from us, offering a compact target which our targets hit unerringly. Then we saw their white shapes, hazy in the dim light, turn about and run.

A few seconds later loud shouts and noises of fighting came from the darkness in front of us. Kerib had realized that the Arabs had desisted from attacking his men to attack the half-*goum* I had brought with me; the old and experienced warrior had followed the white-caped tribesmen, and he was now cutting off their retreat.

It was unwise to fire now, because we would probably shoot down Kerib's men together with the Airs, and therefore I ordered a charge. When we caught up with the remainder of the Air pack, the bewildered marauders understood that the game was up. More than sixty men, half their whole force, had been killed or wounded within the inclosure or during the last and decisive encounter; others had escaped under cover of the darkness. Caught between the two halves of the *goum*, the Air tribesmen who had up to that moment held their ground threw down their weapons. With blood-curdling screeches they asked to be spared in the name of Allah.

A FEW moments later we returned to the wells with a couple of hundred great white meharas and a score of prisoners, who were trembling as if they had the ague, fearing that we would change our minds and kill them at any moment.

Now that the fighting was over, I remembered that I had not seen or heard of Chateaurgeden since the beginning of all that turmoil. I inquired of Sergeant Kerib about him, but he had failed to see the adjutant anywhere.

I understood what that meant; and if I was grieved, I was by no means surprised at the following discovery: When we reached our camp, we noticed a group of meharists who jabbered excitedly, pointing at a huddled heap lying near the trunk of one of the withered palm trees. I went to them, striking a match to see better.

The wavering light of the tiny flame fell on the body of Chateaurgeden, which was recognizable only on account of his adjutant's uniform, for his head had been hacked beyond recognition. Most probably he had been one of the first to face the swarming Airs, who had cornered him and slashed at him with particular rage, incensed by the uniform pointing him out as an officer.

I remembered his words of a few hours ago, his wish to leave the service, get married and settle in his native Bretagne. Unfortunate man, little did he know that the grim skull of death was at hand! I carefully removed his papers, planning to send them as a last memento to his grieving relatives.

We had lost twelve men, and another score were more or less wounded. I sent these toward our base of Djenet, the slightly wounded acting as escort to the disabled. Kerib pulled out another broken tooth from my mouth, sterilized with a burning match a heavy needle, then sewed dexterously the two-inch cut splitting my upper lip and another gap on my chin.

Wounds around the mouth heal quickly; though I was forced to a diet because my gums were too sore to chew at the dry food we carried with us, and in spite of the particles of dust and sand which filtered under the adhesive tape and through the gauze fastened on my wounds, when four days later Kerib removed the stitches, the injuries were already healed. . . .

The next day we encountered a small party of Senoussi

Arabs and renegade Isakamaren Tuareg. We were crossing a country resembling a sea of brown rocks, an ideal place for ambushes. Keradji and his men were riding ahead of the *goum*, in a fanlike formation which covered some six hundred yards of ground.

All of a sudden I saw a Tedjehe scout, a tiny silhouette on top of a distant ridge, stop and bring his gun to his shoulder. A report muffled by the distance sounded clear; then our vanguard quickly darted into a saddle of the ground and became invisible. Almost instantly a hail of bullets fell among us.

I brought my field-glasses to my eyes. Though bullets continued to whistle close to the column, no tribesmen or smoke-puffs pointed out to us the presence of the enemy. That poor visibility was by no means unusual in the most treacherous Adjer ground, but just the same it was most distressing, because it gave no chance to locate the enemy or find out its numbers.

I ordered a score of meharists to dismount and fire at random against the place from where the musketry seemed to come, and I led the remainder of the *goum* to a dry river-bed to our right, a position sheltered from three sides by overhanging bluffs.

Ere long a Tedjehe scout came back at the gallop. To ride to us unseen by the enemy, he had followed the twisting course and intersections of several tiny valleys and ravines; as a result he seemed emerging out of the ground.

"Sidi," he shouted, "if you follow me, you will tear the dogs to pieces."

"Who is firing on us?" I asked.

"About fifty Sen'uss' and Isakamaren, with tall headgear," the Targui replied. "I crawled around the position where they are nesting like vultures. Keradji and the others will now open fire to make them believe that we want to fight them with bullets. Leave here your men who are firing too, to warn not the enemy that we have another plan; and hurry with the rest."

ONCE more a Tedjehe was pointing me out a plain and efficient tactical device. It was the system of his race, which fights with ambushes and counter-ambushes and surprise actions until cold steel plays the final decision. In that broken ground and with small outfits maneuvering on immense stretches of territory, it had a decided advantage over long-sustained actions based on rifle- and machine-gun-fire, because firearms are by no means dangerous and effective where mobility is great and visibility extremely poor. That explains how a few years later the Riffs routed a Spanish army which enjoyed the help of airplanes, artillery, machine-guns by the hundreds, and vastly outnumbering forces; it explains, too, how the French had to drive on steadily for several months to rout Abd el Krim's tribesmen. . . .

Coming back to that encounter on the Adjer plateau: the Tedjehe had barely given his report when I heard clearly a concerted volley nearer than the ones fired by the enemy. That announced unmistakably that Keradji was playing his part. Without the least hesitation I followed the plan of my Hoggar friends; while the meharists on foot kept on firing, I galloped rapidly with the bulk of the *goum* after the flying blue *takarbast* and white mehari of my guide.

Every stride of the galloping meharas brought us nearer to the sound of the enemy's musketry. I unsheathed my sword and turned on the saddle to gaze at my soldiers: the meharists followed, their large grins uncovering sets of teeth dazzling white in the ebony black of their faces; their hands grasped rifles topped by shiny fixed bayonets.

A few moments later the Tedjehe lifted and whirled his two-handed sword. I understood that we were drawing

close to our foes, and I motioned the troopers to take charge formation; we turned like a whirlwind around a last rampart of rocks, and emerged from the ravine to a long rolling slope.

The meharas of our foes were tethered some four hundred yards to our right. The greater part of the marauders fired stretched on the ground, close to the edge of the hill, a couple of hundred yards to our left. The crashing roar of musketry had fully covered the quick staccato padding of the hoofs of our mounts, and the surprise was complete. We charged into the frightened rascals.

THE encounter was fast and decisive. Before the rebels realized what it was all about, the meharists made short work of them, firing their rifles pistol-like with one hand, or stabbing with their fixed bayonets. A quick rally and a second charge wiped out the guards of the marauders' mount and convoy. The whole action had lasted about three-quarters of an hour, but the decisive and final mêlée had been won in less than ten minutes' time.

I ordered a dozen tribesmen who had surrendered tied to the saddles of an equal number of camels. Leaving a squad to guard them, I proceeded to inspect a very large booty which had unexpectedly fallen into our hands.

As I learned later from the prisoners, the band was on its way back to Murzuk, after a couple of months of successful pillaging. They had robbed merchants' parties and minor caravans, putting all their victims to the sword. As a result they had with them a convoy of two-score camels laden with fine Damask silks, scented and painted leather velvety to the touch, spices, coffee and heavy Arabic jewels of solid silver gaudy with delicate textures of filigree gold. But that was just an added responsibility to me, because after deducting the share that went to the Tedjehe according to tribal custom, the rest was a cumbersome burden to be carted around and delivered to the nearest authorities—which, by the way, were not nearer than a good two hundred and fifty miles of twisting mountain trail.

What rejoiced me was the fact that the marauders had dragged with them also a large herd of goats. Fresh goat's milk has not the best flavor in the world, but it is extremely nourishing. I drank plenty of it for several days, because for my sake our *goumiers* loaded three female goats on as many spare camels in spite of the protests of the humped beasts, who hated to convey that squirming and kicking burden. . . .

A couple of weeks later our *goums* accomplished their mission; the western Adjer had been cleared of marauders, temporarily at least. We were notified to return to the central Hoggar country.

As soon as we reached our usual haunts I sent with the weekly messenger to the command of groups of *goums* of Tinfelki a request to be allowed to attend the celebration of the marriage of Henare, the girl who had been rescued by my meharists a few months before, and of Baikou ag Chikka. In due time the permission arrived; I instantly rode with Keradji and the other Tuareg of my *goum* toward Hassi Tinidriouin, where the marriage was scheduled to take place.

When we reached Tinidriouin, we saw a great strip of woolen cloth stretched on two spears stuck near the edge of the tent-village. On it had been painted with red dye the following letters in Tafnihr, the written Tuareg language which derives from an ancient Punic dialect:

Foull ilik ne'as tedula

These words meant "On the name of our daughter who goes to her husband," and announced that the marriage was to be celebrated that very day.

We had barely entered the village and met the greetings of several warriors when a great uproar came from another section of the *tobol* which was hidden from us by a cluster of tents. In the meantime somebody thumped frantically at the great *tobol* drum located in the center of the community.

I went to the place whence the sounds came, and soon I confronted a strange sight. On one side stood a great spread of food and beverages, on another the thick ranks of belles of the village, their comely faces unveiled and flushed with excitement. In the center milled with drawn weapons engaged in mock fight most of the warriors of that community. They darted back and forth, leaping high and yelling at the top of their lungs. Now and then one of them grew hungry and thirsty; he darted out from that mêlée up to the rugs covered with piled food and pitchers of sweetened water and goat's milk, and drank and gulped down ravenously; then he jumped again into the whirling crowd.

Between two tents and alone, Baikou sat on a gorgeously caparisoned horse. From there he waved cordially to us, but he refrained from coming to proffer his greetings, because a Tuareg bridegroom is not allowed to approach anybody from the moment when the marriage ceremony begins up to the final phase.

When the ceremony was finally concluded, the crowd began melting away toward the various tents. "I hope this marriage will not turn out like the one of the Taitoq Am'r ar Sadji!" a soft voice mumbled close to me. I turned about and I saw a young, bright-eyed Targua who smiled at me, uncovering a set of dazzling white teeth.

"What happened to Sadji?" I asked, remembering the Taitoq leader whom I had met at the assembly of Hassi Tinfelki a few months before.

"Four times he has married," the girl replied, "but each time his bride has left him."

"But why?" I asked.

"Why?" the girl replied, staring at me as if amazed at my stupidity. "Because Sadji is a beast!"

That answer, which was thoroughly western rather than Saharan, made me think at once how happier was the lot of these beautiful Targuias than the one of the Bedouin women, who are the chattels and beasts of burden of their tyrannical husbands.

The girl who had spoken with me was Doua ag R'ali, the daughter of one of the local headmen, and a niece of the chief of chiefs Moussa ag Amastane. I was later quartered in the huge tent of her father, where I was proudly shown the family's ancient heirloom—a remarkable Celtiberian sword which the dry atmosphere of the Hoggar had saved from rust and deterioration. Noticing how fascinated I was by that ancient weapon, Doua asked her father and mother to give it to me. A few years later, I made a present of it to my old commander, General Mangin, who afterward won world-wide fame in the great war.

TOWARD the middle of 1914 I was in Algiers, chumming with old friends who had been with me in Kabylie and the Moroccan Atlas. I had three months' leave of absence, my first period of rest since I had left Saumur, not counting of course the weeks of enforced idleness which had been imposed on me by wounds and illness.

Within two days I was to cross the Mediterranean and to see again my native Toulouse and Port Verdres. I felt light like the air, and gay like a child who has been regaled with a full Christmas tree.

I remember it was a sultry afternoon. I had just lunched with a couple of friends at a restaurant which specialized

in sea foods; we were taking a constitutional when an agitated urchin emerged from behind a sun-baked corner carrying a bundle of newspapers under his arm and shouting at the top of his lungs: "Extraordinary edition! The murder of the Archduke!"

A presentiment of impending danger suddenly gripped us; we bought at once three copies and scanned the news of the murder of Francis Ferdinand, heir to the throne of Austria, and of Countess Chotek his wife.

NEXT day news began arriving fast and furious: The overbearing Austrian request to Serbia treating that country like a nest of brigands, the Russian warning to Austria, and the haughty German ultimatum to Russia and France, came in quick succession.

Then with a thrill that sent our blood running fast we saw a smiling lieutenant rush within the rooms of the Military Club waving a large paper surmounted by two crossed flags; it was the order of mobilization.

That night when I returned to the hotel, I surprised the clerk on duty shining under the desk the buttons of a uniform. When he saw that I was glancing at him, he lifted his head and we exchanged a smile.

"*Mon Lieutenant*," he said, pulling out a tunic of sergeant of the line, "I am getting ready. When I go tomorrow to get my voyage papers for Nimes, where my depot is, I want to look my best."

"I see," I replied. "You belong to the mobile reserve of a metropolitan regiment."

"*Mais oui!* I came to Algiers only six months ago. Tell me, *mon Lieutenant*," he said, rising and pointing his fists on the desk, "is it true that the Germans are so strong?"

"They are well prepared, but we will rout them just the same," I replied.

The clerk was a man considerably older than I. He had a good, not too keen face, and the beginning of a paunch. But my words seemed to release in him a hidden force of which at a first glance I had not believed him capable.

"You are a professional soldier," he said, jutting out his chin, "and therefore you count the guns and the regiments and think that the Germans have the best of us; but there is something else.

"This is not 1870; this quarrel is not the quarrel of Napoleon the little, but the quarrel of the French people. We are satisfied with our lot; we believe in our government, our laws, and we don't want *salopards* in spiked helmets to come swaggering into our houses. We are going to get them, strong as they are."

Our eyes met, and we exchanged a smile. From the street suddenly came noises of shouts, hurrahs and songs.

We went to the door of the hotel. A torchlight demonstration was advancing from one of the corners of the street. Waving flags, arm in arm, came Frenchmen and naturalized Spaniards recognizable by their red sashes, shaven lips and sideburns. Mingled with them marched town Arabs, and here and there it was possible to see voluminous burnouses of desert folk.

All races of our North African colonies, the new France, were arising to the call to arms. With a growing enthusiasm I realized that this time the whole country was with the army. Instead of going through a new 1870, we were about to avenge the sufferings of that terrible year.

I went to my room an hour later, tired but relieved. On my desk lay a long envelope bearing the imprint of the Division of Algiers. I opened it and I saw that I was ordered to the groups of spahi *escadrons* which were to sail for France within the same week.

The Mills of God

VIII—The Hatton Garden Robbery

'A fact detective story.'

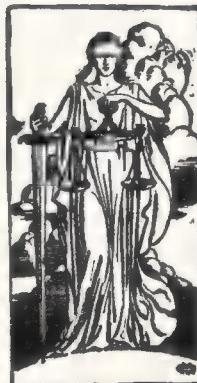
By GEORGE BARTON

WRITERS of detective fiction from the time of the "Moonstone" down to the "Mystery of the Red Flame" have delighted in making rare and precious stones the central theme of their thrilling plots, but none of these products of the imagination, whether they be by famous authors or unknown novelists, ever turned out a yarn that had more real drama packed in it than the true story of the Hatton Garden pearl robbery which stirred all England in 1913 and led to a series of adventures and complications which made it an international case that taxed the wits and the ingenuity of half the detectives of Europe.

The innocent victim in the early part of the affair was Max Mayer, a diamond- and pearl-merchant whose shop was at No. 88 Hatton Garden. He dealt in only the finest and rarest of jewels. He was the Tiffany and the Caldwell of Europe, and some of the gems that passed through his hands were worth a king's ransom. His goods were always insured and he handled the most valuable articles with the nonchalance with which a vendor of toy balloons might deal with his stock in trade. It was rather force of habit than the familiarity which sometimes breeds contempt. He took the precautions essential in such a trade, but he had gone along safely for so many years that possibility of danger seemed very remote.

The incident that turned his little world upside-down occurred when he became the owner of a necklace consisting of sixty-one perfectly matched pearls. It had taken ten years to collect these extremely rare, perfectly graduated stones. The necklace was insured with Lloyd's for six hundred and fifty thousand dollars in our money; views as to its actual value varied, but the consensus of opinion was that it was worth approximately a million dollars. Naturally it was guarded with the greatest care and was exhibited only to a favored few, because those who were able to buy a necklace of that kind were not numerous. Descriptions of it were sent to his representatives in other cities and Mr. Mayer was confident it was only a question of time when he would find a customer willing to invest a fortune in such a bauble.

On June 20, 1913, he received a communication from his Paris representative, Henri Salomon, who said he had a client likely to be interested in the purchase of the costly necklace. It was sent to Paris at once and Mr. Mayer awaited the result of the negotiations with deep interest. But the agent and the customer could not agree on terms and after nearly a month had elapsed it was decided that the pearls should be returned to London. The question of sending it back by messenger was considered, but finally abandoned. Men carrying expensive jewels on trains had been



Illustrated by
Page Trotter

robbed in the past. So it was decided to return the celebrated necklace by registered post.

As a fortune was at stake, every precaution was taken. The necklace was enclosed in a leather case with two large drop pearls and a round pearl. The case was placed in a wooden box; this was wrapped in blue paper and sealed with Mr. Mayer's initials, "M.M." Mr. Salomon personally delivered it to the postal authorities and received the customary receipt. Naturally, it was insured. As soon as it started on its way a telegram was sent to London appraising Mr. Mayer of the fact.

He knew the exact hour at which it should arrive and was at his office early that day in order that he might himself receive the precious consignment. It was delivered on the morning of

July 16th. Mr. Mayer signed for it and as soon as the postal carrier left he went into his private office with his confidential clerk for the purpose of opening the package and placing the pearls in his burglar-proof safe. He was accustomed to handling valuable jewels, but this was worth a king's ransom and it was not surprising that his hands should tremble as he prepared to open it. He cut the string, broke the seal and unwrapped the package. There was the familiar wooden box used to enclose gems. Mr. Mayer opened the lid; as he did so he turned pale and leaned on the desk for support.

And no wonder—for the pearls were not there! In place of them the dazed dealer found eight cubes of French sugar, wrapped in cotton wool and enclosed in part of a newspaper, the *Echo de Paris* of July second.

Imagine your sensations if you suddenly discovered that a fortune of a million dollars had slipped from your trembling fingers! It is true the pearls were insured, but it was for an amount far less than their actual value. And even so, it would mean a long fight and drawn-out litigation before the claim could be settled. As soon as Mr. Mayer had recovered his wits he picked up the telephone and informed Scotland Yard of his loss.

In less than thirty minutes Chief Inspector Ward was in the Hatton Garden shop listening to the recital of the distraught merchant, and making ready to begin the search for the missing pearls.

Naturally the post-office authorities were called into conference and then began the investigation into a mystery that was to attain world-wide interest. The package was traced over every yard of the land and sea it had traversed from the time it left Paris until it was delivered in London. It was followed from the moment it was mailed at the Calais Maritime station to the East Central sorting office in the English capital, and from thence to the office of Max Mayer. Everything was in order and

the authorities were able to produce receipts from everyone who had handled it. The carrier who conveyed it from the post-office to the jeweler was able to tell of all the stops he had made on his way. He recalled having delivered other packages to shops in Hatton Garden. One of these was to Mr. Silverman, who was a jeweler in a small way in that section. But the carrier had only paused there for a very brief time and was confident the package had not left his possession during that short call.

One of the results of the preliminary investigation was to absolve Max Mayer and Henri Salomon from any possible carelessness in the matter. They were men of standing, not likely to be neglectful or indifferent in handling costly gems. This absolution was important because otherwise their reputation would have been affected and their business injured.

At this stage of the case the underwriters appeared in the case for the first time. They had much at stake and they offered a reward of fifty thousand dollars for information that would lead to the recovery of the pearls. A full description of the missing stones was prepared and given world-wide publicity. As a consequence the police department in all large cities joined in the attempt to solve the great mystery.

There is a sort of freemasonry among dealers in precious stones. They often have sources of information that are not known even to the police. This is not said in any spirit of disparagement. By the very nature of their business many of their transactions must be confidential. So it came about that early in August—about three weeks after the event had become an international sensation—two pearl brokers in Paris got an intimation that the Hatton Garden pearls had found their way to Antwerp. These brokers named Quadratstein and Brandstatter were naturally eager for the reward and willing to go to great lengths to win it. Eventually they found their way to Antwerp, which divides with Amsterdam the distinction of being the great diamond center of the world. There they discovered that a man named Leiser Gutwirth knew something about the missing pearls.

It was not easy to locate him, but in the end they succeeded. He was found in that quarter of the city where the pearl dealers of the world congregate to buy, sell and exchange their precious goods. A detective going there would have found himself in a blind alley. But the two merchants from Paris were known to the profession and they excited no suspicion. They had an interview with Gutwirth and he told them he was in a position to lay his hands on the Hatton Garden pearls if they were ready to do business with him. They were given to understand that

"no triflers need apply" and they assured him in all truthfulness that they were not triflers but were anxious to get the pearls. Gutwirth told them that he was willing to sell them the necklace for a million francs, if he were given one hundred thousand francs as his commission. He assured them that if they got the pearls for this price they would be dirt cheap. They conceded this, but naturally said they would have to see them before they would come to terms on the price.

Then ensued a lengthy game of hide-and-seek which surpasses anything known in the annals of crime detection. In the end Brandstatter found himself dickering with the Antwerp man. He told him before he could come to an agreement for the purchase of the gems he would have to consult his partner, who at that time was in Paris. So he went home and a week later sent this wire:

"I have a buyer for the article."

That was a brief but highly significant message, and as a result of it an appointment was made for a meeting in the city of London. It was agreed that the conference should be held in one of the Lyons tea-shops in Holborn. Strange setting for the second act in the great pearl robbery! But the big jewel thieves evidently worked on the principle that the crowded section of a great city would be safer than any other place they might select. At the time appointed Brandstatter and his partner strolled into the shop in the most casual manner and took a seat at the unoccupied table in a far corner of the room. High noon was the hour appointed for the meeting and the clock on the wall pointed to one minute before the time.

As the two sat sipping coffee, they wondered if the Antwerp man would keep his appointment. They had already been in communication with the police and the underwriters, and the place was under surveillance. Two plain-clothes men were patrolling the sidewalk of the crowded street, trying to appear like ordinary tourists viewing the passing scene. Presently the clock struck the hour and Leiser Gutwirth walked in. He was followed by another man; the two newcomers seated themselves at the table with Brandstatter and his partner. Gutwirth presented his companion as Joseph Grizard. The name came like a revelation to the Paris pearl-dealers. They had never met the man before, but knew that he had the reputation of being one of the boldest and most resourceful crooks who ever specialized in stolen jewelry.

Brandstatter afterward said that his heart was in his mouth at this first meeting with Grizard, the moving spirit in the whole affair. The audacity of the man was almost unbelievable. He seated himself with an air of nonchalance, accepted the introduction with the affable manner of a man of the world, and then looked about him with a bored expression.

"Beastly weather we're having," he remarked.

Brandstatter, whose mind was on stolen pearls rather than weather conditions, was taken aback by the unexpectedness of this harmless remark. He admitted that the London climate was not all that



it should be and then invited the other men to join him in a little luncheon. As they finished Grizard put his hand in his pocket and brought out a cigarette-case. He held it while the others helped themselves. He took one himself and then put the case back in his pocket. Holding his own cigarette between his fingers, he looked around in a listless manner. While they were eating a man had come into the place and taken a seat at an adjoining table. He was a furtive-looking person who seemed out of his element here. Grizard caught his eye and said in a polite tone:

"Would you kindly oblige me with a match?"

The stranger did not answer, but dug down into his trousers pocket, brought forth a match-box and carelessly tossed it over to the table around which the negotiators were seated. Grizard picked it up and passed it over to Brandstatter with a meaning smile:

"You first," he remarked.

The jeweler reached for the box and opened it and what he saw caused his heart to beat faster. In it were three splendid pearls, reposing on a tiny bed of cotton!

Brandstatter recognized them at once. They were part of the Mayer pearls. It will be recalled that in addition to the pearl necklace the original package had contained two big drop pearls and one round pearl. The significance of this was not lost on the negotiator. It meant that the necklace was being held in reserve. At once the three men got down to business. It was agreed that these three pearls should be weighed and the price fixed on them. The quartette parted with this understanding.

But from the moment Grizard and his companion left the tea-room in Holborn they were marked men. Scotland Yard detectives followed them by day and watched their lodgings by night. It required several meetings before they were able to come to terms. In the meantime Brandstatter had introduced another man into the little game. He was a Mr. Spanier, who showed a deep interest in the three odd pearls. When they were offered to him he promptly bought them—and paid for them in marked money.

Mr. Spanier, it may be said parenthetically, was one of the most reliable men of the Bureau of Criminal Investigation of Scotland Yard.

About that time Grizard discovered that he was being shadowed. That did not disturb him greatly. There had been other occasions during his rather crooked life when he had been shadowed and had eventually slipped through the hands of the police. But the stakes in the present game were too great to permit them to be jeopardized. So the wary crook devised a method for his own protection. He sought out an ex-convict who claimed to know all of the detectives in London, and engaged him to shadow the detectives. Then began the sport of "shadowing the shadowers." The detectives following Grizard made their reports regularly to Scotland Yard, and the convict shadowing the detectives made his reports to Grizard. There was a third set of sleuths representing the insurance company.

In less time than it takes to record it, Grizard and his staff were under arrest.



It is not surprising that they should occasionally run into each other and there were times when one Scotland Yard man was on the point of hauling another Scotland Yard man to the nearest police station. Never were there so many opportunities for complications. The real danger was that the game might be gummed by the zealous and energetic disciples of *Sherlock Holmes*. But in this battle of wits "Cammy" Grizard came out second best. The reports he received were imperfect; those made to Scotland Yard were meticulous in detail.

The time had now arrived for pulling off the big deal on the million-dollar necklace.

The wary Mr. Grizard was not taking any chances and he was particularly anxious to consummate the job in some spot where they were not likely to be seen by the police. So on August 25th five of them met at the First Avenue Hotel in Holborn. Brandstatter, growing weary of the delay, insisted that the necklace would have to be shown to him at once, or the whole deal would be off. With a smile Grizard put his hand in his pocket and drew out a box and laid it on the table. The lid was opened and there was the set of million-dollar pearls for which the police had been working so long. Spanier was again introduced by Brandstatter as the man who had the money, and after he had convinced himself of the genuineness of the pearls he said he would have to have another day in which to raise the money—which was demanded in hard cash.

On the following morning Grizard and his gang got together in preparation for the final meeting. It was necessary that they should have a private talk before they met the prospective purchaser. Ordinarily a meeting of this kind is held in some thieves' den, but the master rogue vetoed that at the outset. His convict assistant had assured him that the police were watching all of these places and that would be like walking into a trap. Mr. Brandstatter suggested that they might get together in the Holborn tea-room, but that did not appeal to Mr. Grizard. He had the thieves' superstition that it is unlucky to meet twice in the same place when you are about to pull off a big *coup*. Another of the gang thought that the British Museum would be a nice quiet place for a conference between the greatest crooks in Europe. This reference to the British Museum gave Mr. Grizard an idea.

"We meet tomorrow afternoon," he said, "in the British Museum Tube Station."

At the appointed time the little group found its way to a far corner of this particular station. From time to time other persons came down into the tube to take outgoing trains, while others alighting from the cars made their way to the street. Grizard was in charge of the squad of crooks. This was the day and the hour at which the celebrated necklace was to change hands. After many anxious weeks they were about to exchange the troublesome pearls for good Bank of England money. In a short time the cash would be in their pockets and they could leave town for a well-earned vacation! The only thing that bothered them was an agreement as to a division of the spoils. One of them ventured to speak of this delicate side of the business, but he was promptly squelched by the hard-boiled Grizard.

"Shut up, you fool," he cried, "and wait until we get the money!"

That was hardly the way for one respectable thief to speak to another, but the man took the rebuff in silence and thereafter held his peace.

In the meanwhile another little group had formed at the other end of the subway station. They were aggressive-looking men, alert in their movements, and apparently keyed for action. The man in charge gave a signal and in less time than it takes to record the fact, Grizard and the members of his staff had been placed under arrest. Scotland Yard had executed another of its famed master-strokes. The detectives treated their prisoners with polite consideration, but it was not long before all of the crooks had been landed in the famed Bow Street police court.

"Search the prisoners!" cried Inspector Ward.

Grizard was the first one to undergo the ordeal. He was taken unaware when he was arrested, but by this time he had recovered his accustomed self-possession and underwent the search with a sort of haughty pride. He was all but stripped, but the results were disappointing. He had some small coins in his trousers pockets, and a few banknotes in his wallet. A plain watch and a small stickpin constituted all of his jewelry. A penknife, some bits of string and a poem clipped from a provincial newspaper made up the sum total of all his possessions. It was a poverty-stricken list of assets for one of the most successful jewel thieves in history. But then we have known of millionaires being caught without enough money to pay their carfare.

Doggedly the police turned to the other members of the

gang. The search was one of the most thorough ever made in the Bow Street police court. But if Grizard seemed poor, his accomplices were virtually paupers. Finally the searchers gave up in despair.

Not one of the prisoners had the pearl necklace!

The Scotland Yard men were deeply chagrined—they had expected to get the evidence on one of the crooks and announce the completion of one of the biggest triumphs in the history of the Yard.

No one was more bitterly disappointed than was Chief Inspector Ward. He had purposely postponed the arrest in order to get the men with the goods in their possession. The Scotland Yard detectives resemble our Secret Service in one respect. They carefully guard against premature arrests. It is their aim always to have sufficient evidence to convict. They were morally certain that the gang had started out with the valuable pearls in their possession. Yet when they were searched, not a single crook had so much as an imitation pearl in his clothes.

It was more than disappointing—it was positively humiliating.

But Chief Inspector Ward and his associates did not give up. They continued to look for the million-dollar necklace. They worked with British persistence and felt convinced that the mystery would be solved in the end.

In the meantime they had the four thieves under lock and key and with ample evidence to convict them of the theft of the three odd pearls which they had sold to Mr. Spanier, and for which they had been paid with marked money.

Just about this time, when it looked as though all hope for capturing the million-dollar necklace had gone, Scotland Yard made a most important discovery. They found a diemaker named Gordon who testified that he had been engaged by Samuel Silverman to make a die of the "M.M." seal of Max Mayer.

IN itself, this may sound trivial, but it was the key which unlocked the mystery which had hitherto baffled the detectives.

The importance of it may be understood when it is stated that Silverman was the jeweler in a small way who had a shop at 101 Hatton Garden. It was there that the postman had stopped on his way to Mayer's place on the morning of the robbery. The carrier was brought to Scotland Yard and questioned again. It developed that he had been employed in the postal service for more than thirty years and that he had a spotless record. He ad-



The woman deliberately threw the pearls into the muddy street.

mitted that he was in the habit of chatting with Silverman when he stopped there to deliver the mail. He had done so on the morning of July 16th. He could not recall how long he remained there. In any event he had laid his heavy bag on the counter while he reached in for some letters addressed to Mr. Silverman.

WHAT followed then requires no stretch of the imagination. The thieves, who were all prepared for the *coup*, had substituted a fake box for the one that contained the million-dollar necklace. They had covered it with the seals and to all outward appearance it was the exact box that had been mailed in Paris and which was later delivered to the astonished Mr. Mayer. The letter-carrier did not have the slightest notion of the value of the package he was carrying. He was absolved of all improper intent in the matter. At the most he would have been guilty of carelessness.

The story of how the pearl necklace had been stolen was perfectly clear now; only one thing was needed to make the triumph of the police complete, and that was the recovery of the necklace.

The dénouement came about in the most unexpected manner possible. It was a bit of pure chance and would have been laughable if it were not for the fact that the really meritorious work done by the detectives was worthy of a more dramatic climax.

Two weeks after the arrest of the four crooks in the British Museum Tube Station a young piano-worker came out of the doorway of his home in Finsbury and started for the factory in which he was employed. It was a dull morning, with the overcast sky so familiar in London, but young Mr. Horn was in a happy state of mind and whistled gayly as he proceeded on his way. As he crossed the gutter at one of the intersections of St. Paul's Road he noticed a large match-box lying in the mud. Ordinarily the average man would pay no attention to a thing of that kind. But something prompted Mr. Horn to stoop down and pick up the box. It may have been that he was a frugal person who saw a chance to get some matches for nothing. It is also possible that he was the thrifty kind of man who habitually picks up pins in the street.

At all events he reclaimed this particular match-box and, as he walked along, casually opened it. The box contained no matches, but it was filled with a collection of wonderfully graduated pearls. Mr. Horn sniffed at them in the firm belief that they were imitation pearls. But even imitation pearls have some value, and Mr. Horn, being honest as well as thrifty, took time to take his find to Scotland Yard, where in the usual course of events the pearls found their way to the Lost Property Office of that place.

How long they remained there is not known but it is certain that for some hours they mingled with mislaid umbrellas, stolen coats, books that had been forgotten in the subways, worn wallets and articles of wear that had seen better days.

The head of the Bureau of Criminal Investigation looks over this curious collection from time to time and when he glanced at this particular day's haul his attention was immediately attracted by the pearls in the match-box. They were turned over to Chief Inspector Ward and the sight of them caused that astute detective to gasp with astonishment.

They were the identical pearls forming the million-dollar necklace that had played such a conspicuous part in the famous Hatton Garden robbery!

Further investigation developed the fact that when the

four crooks had met in the British Museum Tube Station they had been shrewd enough to leave the pearls in the care of Mrs. James Lockett, the wife of one of their number. When the papers came out with flaming headlines telling of the arrest of the jewel-thieves, the woman was panic-stricken. She felt confident that the detectives would make a search of the lodgings of all the prisoners and she had sense enough to know that if they were found in her possession Mr. James Lockett would face a long term in penal solitude.

What to do with them was a puzzle. It was out of the question to pawn them, because all of the money-lenders had been warned to be on the lookout for the stolen pearls. So the distracted woman went out one dark night and deliberately threw them into the muddy street; with a dramatic gesture she tossed away a fortune! And then along came the piano-maker and picked them up and carried them to the detectives who had been scouring three countries in the search for the million-dollar necklace.

The evidence was now complete and in a short time the jewel-thieves were formally placed on trial. There were four of them in the dock—Joseph Grizard, Samuel Silverman, Leiser Gutwirth and James Lockett. Some one called them the "*Four Musketeers* of the underworld." Grizard was the man for whom the police had been hunting for years. They had caught him before—but never with the goods. In most of his other enterprises he had kept in the background directing the operations of his subordinates. In that way he had escaped the police net. But the richness of the booty in this case had tempted him to forgo his usual reserve and get directly in the game. The result was that he was now facing the Blind Goddess of Justice.

Sir Richard Muir was the prosecutor for the Crown. He was known as one of the most astute men in the legal profession in Great Britain. He was particularly anxious to get a conviction in this case because he realized that Grizard was a dangerous man. He had intimate knowledge of this fact, as one of his personal friends had been robbed of jewelry only a few years before but the master criminal had escaped because of lack of convincing evidence. Muir did not propose to let this happen again and he had numerous conferences with the Scotland Yard detectives before the men were placed on trial. Then he marshaled his facts in such a masterly manner that conviction was inevitable.

ALL four men were found guilty and Grizard was sentenced to seven years' penal servitude, while the others given shorter years in jail. The Judge who pronounced his doom characterized him as "the world's greatest jewel-thief."

Grizard listened to this with an air of indifference that amazed everybody in the courtroom. Evidently he took it as simply part of the dangerous game in which he was habitually employed. His three confederates were terror-stricken, but he paid no attention to their wails. While he was in the dock he suffered from an annoying cough and when some one asked him what he thought of the sentence he calmly said that his cold was giving him more concern than the prospect of seven years in the penitentiary.

He served his term and soon after his release engaged in another robbery. He was captured almost red-handed and once again was sent to jail. He had developed tuberculosis by this time and soon after he began serving his last sentence, died in prison—a sad but fitting finish for a man who had utilized his talents solely in preying upon the public.

The Flowing Road

*A complete novel of swift adventure in
that last great unexplored wilderness
of the upper Amazon.*

by DON
CAMERON
SHAFER

"**A**S though raising tame rubber trees, where more grow wild than man can ever use, were not folly enough, you ask for white laborers!"

João da Calvero, one of the oldest *seringales* of the wild rubber country, laughed aloud as he leaned back in his little iron chair before the sidewalk café table and lighted another cigarette.

"You have come a long way downriver for nothing." He spoke out of a lifetime of hazardous rubber-gathering in the Amazon wilderness. "This is a wild country of wild rubber and wild men, and you waste time trying to tame any of the three. Half a hundred rubber plantations such as yours have failed almost within sight of this very city, for lack of laborers of any color."

"Amigo, you do not understand—"

João laughed, as one who knows only too well, his swart face puckering into a thousand fine wrinkles, his long white mustachios bristling.

To João, growing tame rubber trees where more grew wild than anyone knew what to do with—looking for white laborers where there were but few of any color—was sheer folly. For this was Manaos, the Pearl of the Jungle, the capital of Brazilian Amazonas, a thousand miles up the greatest river in the world, and at the very doorway of the tropic wilderness and the wild rubber country. A few thousand motley people calling this mud-bank village "Little Paris," a city only by comparison with the scattered little riverbank hamlets about it, suggestive of Paris only by a familiar label on the wine-bottle between the two men. A wild, lawless, devil-may-care frontier town where Portuguese *seringales* finance their hazardous rubber-gathering expeditions into the unknown tropical interior. A few score rubber princes living languidly and luxuriously in their fine houses when the price of rubber is high, starving in frock coats and Paris gowns when it is low, and a motley horde of half-naked *Indios*,—cannibals and head-hunters but yesterday,—of renegade lazy white men, of ragged blacks scorning all labor in memory of the slavery they had just escaped. A city at the very edge of the civilized world, where the Rio Negro, like a huge black snake, winds down from the northwestern wilderness to meet the muddy yellow flood of the mighty Amazon flowing out of the last great un-



Tono kept well off-shore beyond arrow-flight. . . . Max Wilson and Anita occupied the shaded awning.

explored tropical wilderness left to tempt scientists, explorers, big-game hunters and adventurers.

Rank odors of dead fish and rotting vegetation blowing up from the sable river. Ragged, half-naked men, in every shade of brown and black, loafing on the weathered docks. A frontier city where it was easier to rob the rubber-gatherers of their wilderness spoils than it was to work, where the price of necessities and ordinary commodities went beyond even the limits of robbery and extortion. Men carried revolvers in their pockets and kept loaded rifles in their houses. Artillery and machine-guns were parked in the public square, for here was no law but the law of might. Manaos, capital of a vast wilderness, rivers like inland seas in an endless expanse of green forest, uncharted, unknown, where the only roads are the flowing roads, the largest system of navigable waterways in the world.

"You North Americans never learn this country," accused João, as one who speaks his mind frankly between friends. "You can hire these Peruvians, *coboclos*, with a handful of silver, to face every danger of the unknown interior, the swarms of noxious insects, the poisonous snakes, the man-eating jaguars, the strange tropical diseases, even the wild jungle savages and their poisoned arrows; and they will work like giants to gather a few kilograms of wild rubber; but you cannot hire one of them with all the gold of the Incas to dig in the ground like a hungry armadillo for a single day. These river men will not do hard manual

Illustrated by L. R. Gustavson



"There is danger and hard work, inconvenience and loneliness, even as you say, but we are both enlisted in a great service to mankind. We have to be where we are until we have revolutionized the great rubber industry for a world on wheels. We are breeding rubber trees up there, just as your fellow-countrymen in the Matto Grosso highlands breed better cattle for their ranches."

"Who ever heard of such a thing!" exclaimed João.

"It has been done successfully in my country with many fruit trees and flowering plants."

"It is a thing against God!"

"And a little extra help right now," sighed Wilson, "a few months longer, and it is done."

Max Wilson, in desperate need of help, had collected a handful of doubtful men, mostly blacks, but the American he hoped to find was not among them. While he was making one last desperate search to find a dependable white man, some one he could trust with these hastily recruited

laborers, the work of supervising the loading for their long upriver journey was in charge of his granddaughter Anita Shannon. A youthful figure, in the familiar outdoor clothing of American youth of both sexes, and about her slender middle a cartridge belt holding a businesslike blue gun. A young girl, and yet as active and useful as any man in watching and controlling the laborers and directing the loading of the baggage and supplies being stowed away in the long hardwood canoes. Slender, of medium height, curly light hair newly cropped, sun-brown, a very beautiful young girl, and most conspicuous in her blonde beauty in a country where nearly all the women are dark and darker.

The heavy canoes rode a choppy sea, whipped into inky waves by opposing wind and current. On the steering platform of the largest canoes poised the picturesque figure of Tono the Wild, king of the wild-rubber gatherers, a swarthy giant of a man, in all the barbaric splendor of new clothes, though bare of foot, shouting his orders in the loud full voice of authority, laughing and calling to the fair girl above him against the blue. Because of these doubtful laborers Wilson was glad to avail himself of this opportunity to travel with the rubber-hunters instead of by the uncertain river steamers. With Tono and his well-armed foremen there would be no mutiny, no desertion, and unwilling backs would bend or break. Once these laborers were safely up the Rio Jaupery, on the Wilson plantation, far into the wilderness, there would be little opportunity to escape, and they would have to work out their bond.

"Into the canoes," bellowed Tono, in a voice that meant obedience or a blow. "Step lively there, but carefully, lest you fall into the river. In with you for your long ride with Tono! You travel now with the king of the rubber-gatherers, and let me warn you, the only men who ever got away from Tono on this river floated away face down. So move when I speak, and open your mouths only

labor for all the money in Manaos, even if they are starving. They consider it an insult to be asked to work."

The North American was tall and thin, looking more like an elderly college professor than a rubber planter: a big dome of a head, fringed with white hair, smooth bony face, hooked nose, high bulging forehead, spectacles. He spoke the mellow Portuguese slowly and with studied effort, as one who knows many languages but thinks in only one.

"I have found a few hands—" he began.

"River rats!" corrected João. "They will run away from you at the first opportunity, stealing everything they can lay their dirty hands on. Don't I know! They do not intend to work for you, but to rob you."

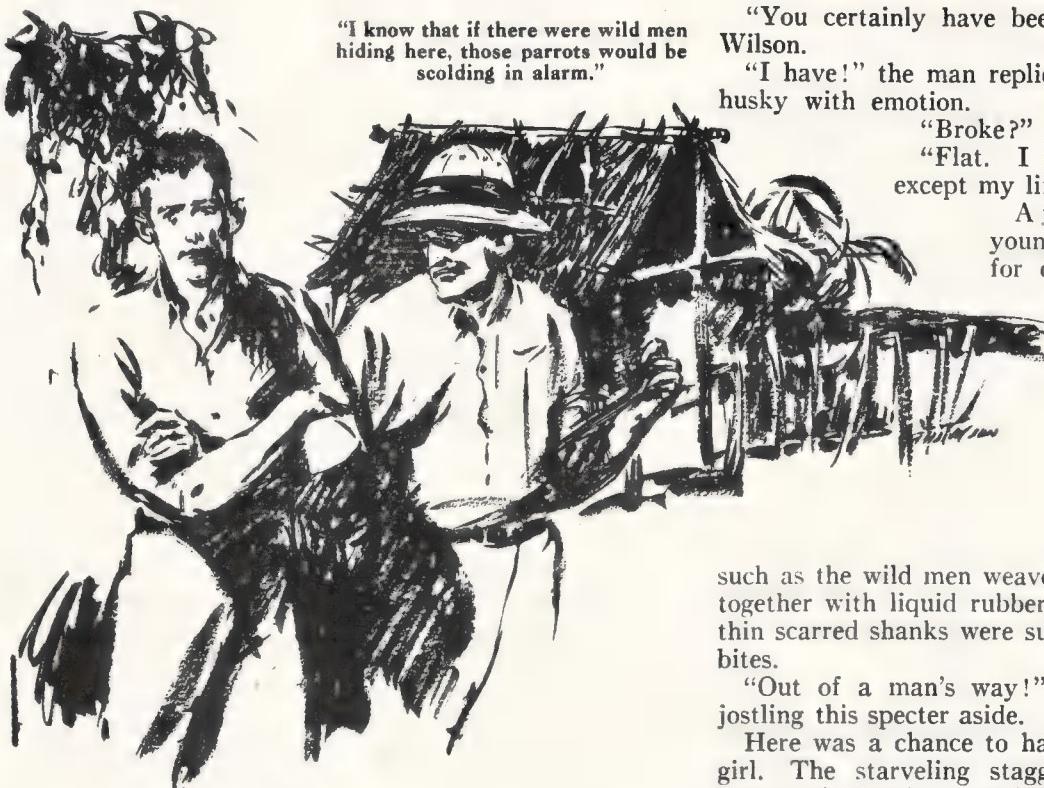
"I was hoping to find an American, some one with experience in handling such men—"

"There are few North Americans here, and not one to be hired at any price for such a wild upriver enterprise," said João in all truth. "Even your big-game hunters, swarming through Asia and through Africa, do not venture here."

"Ah, João, you do not understand," sighed the white-haired Northerner. "What you say is true enough, but this enterprise of mine is larger and more important than a few loads of rubber. Up there in the wilderness of the Rio Jaupery I am trying to do something really big for the whole civilized world."

"Listen, Senhor Wilson, to one who has given a long lifetime to this precarious rubber business," responded João. "It is a waste of time and fortune to grow tame rubber trees where there is all the wild rubber you want for the taking. A great scientist is lost to the world when you hide yourself up there in the wilderness. And, I tell you again, the Rio Jaupery country is wild and dangerous. Truly it is no place for the thrice lovely Senhorita Anita."

"I could not get along without her," smiled Wilson.



"I know that if there were wild men hiding here, those parrots would be scolding in alarm."

to eat—you will have no breath left for words when you become acquainted with these paddles. Tono feeds upon such dark meat as you and he is always hungry."

At the last moment Wilson came hurrying down to the dock.

"I couldn't find a white man," he reported.

"Never mind, Gramp."

"But if we can get these men up there, they can't very well get away."

"Tono will get them there. You can see with one eye that there are no Uncle Toms and Faithful Fridays in this tough bunch; but Barry and I can manage them."

"I do wish we could have found one good dependable American, I'd certainly feel easier."

From behind a green island floated a small dugout canoe of strange pattern, and wielding the heart-shaped carved paddle was a white man—bearded, ragged, sick, worn quite down to skin and bones, and yet unmistakably a white man.

"Oh, look!" laughed the girl. "Here is your American now—the original vagabond of the flowing road!"

CHAPTER II

"WHAT place is this?" the stranger asked in English.
"Manaos," answered the girl.

The long, narrow dugout canoe of strange Indian design, laboriously burned and chipped with a stone ax from a single log, slid over the black water to the practiced swing of the carved paddle and touched the dock.

"I thought it must be!"—with a weary sigh, as though a long hard journey ended there, getting stiffly out. "I'm glad to see home folks again!"

"You won't see many here," warned Wilson, looking this stranger over very carefully.

"Two Americans look like a crowd to me!"

As the man climbed upon the dock, the girl's questioning blue eyes swept over him, tilting her fine nose disdainfully. A scarecrow figure, indeed, though he held his shaggy head proudly erect.

"You certainly have been up against it," commented Wilson.

"I have!" the man replied in a low, tired voice, a bit husky with emotion.

"Broke?"

"Flat. I lost everything, back yonder, except my life and self-respect."

A weird figure of a man, whether young or old they could not tell for certain, except that his teeth

were white and even. His dark eyes burned bright with some inner fire that might have been a fever in his blood. His shirt was but a rag, half covering bony ribs, and his breeches had been roughly made from hand-woven native cotton loin-cloths,

such as the wild men weave on their crude looms, pasted together with liquid rubber. He was barefooted and his thin scarred shanks were sunburned, and raw from insect bites.

"Out of a man's way!" roared Tono in Portuguese, jostling this specter aside.

Here was a chance to have a little fun, to amuse this girl. The starveling staggered weakly back from the thrust of Tono's powerful shoulder, recovering himself with an effort at the very edge of the dock, thus escaping the ducking Tono planned.

"You big black *coto*!"

His thin arm was weak, but nevertheless a bony fist smacked noisily if harmlessly on Tono's surprised face.

"*Dios!*" Tono's dark countenance went black as any negro's, to be insulted with a blow in the face before this girl. "No man ever struck Tono and lived to boast of it."

His big brown fist snatched at the silver-handled machete hanging at his belt, his heavy face a mask of primitive rage.

"Be careful, monkey!"—the thin bearded face so close to Tono's he could feel the words on his cheek,—"or I will disturb that nest of turtle eggs in your middle!"

"*Dios!*" gasped Tono. "Help from this madman!"

For the white man had snatched the gun from the girl, and the threatening muzzle of the cocked weapon was deep in Tono's paunchy middle. And Tono the Wild knew when he was looking into the eyes of a dangerous man.

"What are you two doing?"

The girl threw herself between them, shoving both men aside, wresting the gun from this stranger's weak hand.

"Back, both of you!"—sharply, as one used to handling quarrelsome males. "We'll have no trouble here!"

As the ragged stranger staggered back on his thin legs, weak and weaving, Tono immediately recovered his courage in blustering rage.

"I will make two of you!" The bright steel was an arc of bluish light in his swinging fist. "I will—"

"You will behave yourself, Tono."

Instantly she was beside the white man, as one instinctively protects the weak from the strong, and the threatening gun was in her steady right hand. The giant backed away, more afraid of the girl than he was of any gun.

Max Wilson intervened. "Where are you going?" he asked of the derelict.

"Back home."

They were always going back home, these tropic tramps.

"Before you start for home, you need clothing, food, rest, a bath—"

"And I mean to have them!"

The tone of the man's voice encouraged Max Wilson to go on.

"Come with me; you shall have all that and more—a bit of money for your empty pockets."

"I have no pockets," he smiled. "When I made these pants, I didn't have any use for pockets. I am going home."

"It is a long swim," commented the girl.

"I am going home,"—his lean jaw hard set to her taunting voice,—"if I have to swim all the way there on my back."

Wilson liked him all the better for this.

"Come with me—I need you, and you can earn the money for your passage. It is a thousand miles down the big river to Para and the sea. Home is a long distance away. Put in a few months with us, and you can earn enough money—"

"I'll get what money I need up there." A wave of his bony hand toward the town.

"Come with us," repeated Wilson urgently. "I will pay you well—"

"I am not looking for a job."

"Of course not!" agreed the girl.

"You are young, an American, even if you are about done for," pleaded Wilson. "I offer you a chance to get on your feet, to be a man. I need one of your kind and breed."

"No!"—firmly.

"Don't waste time coaxing him," said the girl. "If he were worth bothering with he wouldn't be standing here in rags."

She turned immediately to the waiting canoes, without another glance at the man, or she would have seen his thin body straighten to her words.

"Sorry you won't come along," said Wilson. "I was hoping you were looking for a job."

"No, I wasn't!"

Remembering that his granddaughter had an uncanny way of reading men, Wilson turned reluctantly toward the loaded canoes where the mighty Tono was bellowing final orders. But he had not taken five steps before he felt a firm bony hand upon his arm.

"Wait." A new note was in the newcomer's voice. "Don't judge me by these rags. I have been fighting the jungle for so long—it almost won! I'll go with you."

TONO the Wild drove his long hardwood canoes steadily against the black waters of the Rio Negro. Wet paddles dipped rhythmically; the black water ran hissing against the sloping prows of the speeding boats. The near shore-line drew hurriedly past like a narrow speeding ribbon of dark green.

Tono was both proud and flattered that the aristocratic North American and his beautiful granddaughter should be his guests on the way upriver. Usually they were towed, at a stiff price, behind one of the river steamers for the best part of their long journey. But now, with

these doubtful labor recruits on their hands, Tono's invitation to accompany his flotilla had been most acceptable, for he was a man to handle men—any kind of men.

Max Wilson and his granddaughter Anita occupied the shaded awning of native matting, built up over the center of the lead canoe, where Tono stood in all his pride and splendor and absolute authority directing their course against the treacherous currents. His loud voice boomed orders in a resonant bass. His men leaped to obey. Tono was determined that this young woman, this beautiful and exotic stranger from the North, should know him for a man, a man who had a way with women, who was master of the river, and king of the wild-rubber gatherers.

The big freight canoes were like a few old sticks in such a mighty stream, often miles wide. Tono kept well offshore, a matter of precautionary habit with these wilderness rovers, not only to avoid the swarms of insect pests clouding the jungle wall, but to keep well beyond arrow-flight lest some hidden red warrior loosen a poisoned shaft at his hereditary enemies.

Behind the large canoes came a smaller craft, well loaded with supplies, the new plantation laborers at the paddles, and among them the nondescript American who, at the last moment, had volunteered to go along. Tono knew these worthless water-rats of the river towns. He had no faith in them or their labor contracts. An old trick of such elusive scoundrels to agree to a term of labor, and after being issued new clothing and having fed up on the commissary supplies, to desert at the first opportunity, before actual labor began, with whatever they could steal. So in the stern of this last canoe he placed one of his own men, a thick-set, half-naked Peruvian, looking more like a Jap wrestler, so Mongolian were his Inca features, a modern repeating rifle in his big hands, his brown torso crossed and recrossed with heavy cartridge belts.

"Lean on that wood, my little water-monkeys," this one laughed mirthlessly. "Keep close behind those other boats, my little ones, or I will lighten this canoe with the weight of a dead man!"

There was no law but the rifle lying across his naked brown knees. A red savage, this one, as cruel as his own forebears who sacrificed living men to their ancient

gods—and Tono had given him his orders.

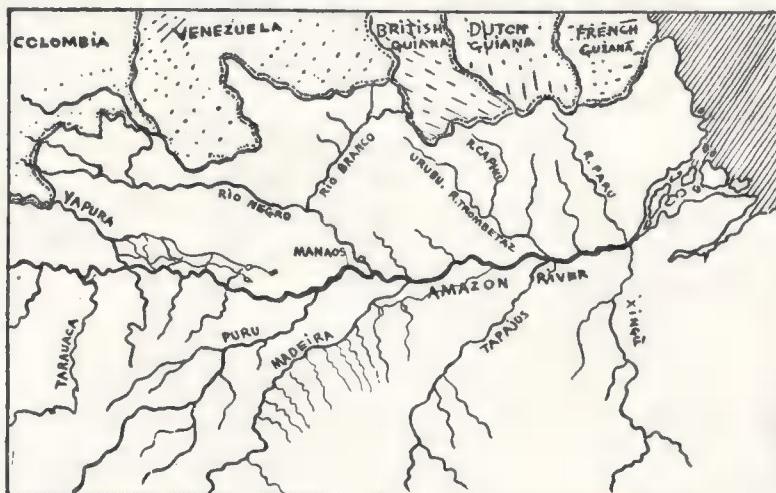
"These fish are hungry," he chuckled coldly, "and they do so love the taste of a lazy man!"

The sullen mongrel crew bent to their paddles in all fear. But the lean, hard young American, who was shaving with a borrowed razor, paid no attention to these threats.

"A paddle, hairy one!" roared the guard. "Get to work there with the others, or I will put you where the hair will singe off without the bother of a razor, if there is any truth in what your priests say."

The young American went calmly on with his shaving, speaking through the white lather out of the corner of his mouth.

"Shoot," said he. "I have just paddled a thousand miles



The great flowing road—the Amazon.

on the Big River, and I would rather be shot than touch a paddle again."

"You will work your passage here!"

"I will beat time for these paddlers on your thick head with my fists!"—turning on him angrily. "Since when did you begin shouting orders to white men on this river?"

The beard was off now, a dash of river water revealing a lean and bony face, but with a good profile, though the facial bones and hard jaw-muscles were a bit too much in evidence.

"I have Tono's orders," growled the guard, "that this boat must keep up with the others."

"Tono bawls his orders into brown ears, not white." This was true enough. "I am in charge of this boat and these men. Give me that rifle and grab a paddle."

THE boats drove steadily past little clearings hacked out of the endless forest, consisting of but three or four crudely built, palm-thatched native huts, mapped as towns, but in reality the home of a few indolent Brazilians who lived, somehow, by trading a little caoutchouc with passing steamers. There were no horses, where there were no roads but the river roads, no cattle but river-cows, no cultivation. Where they could grow everything, they planted nothing.

The sullen, muscle-weary crew, driven by fear, had no breath for words. The *thud-thud-thud* of their paddles on the gunwales, beating time to measured strokes, was like the continuous roll of savage drums. From the boats ahead came a weird barbaric chant as the Peruvians voiced their ancient river song.

"Where do you go?" asked the white man, more to break this maddening rhythm with the sound of a voice than any desire for information.

"Far up the Rio Jaupery to the wild rubber trees," answered the Peruvian.

"Where is this planting of tame rubber trees to which I journey?"

"But a little way up the Jaupery."

"How far from here?"

The Peruvian held up his fingers to indicate the number of days by canoe.

"Is it so?"—somewhat astounded. "Why did these white people go so far into the wilderness to plant their rubber trees?"

"The Odd Footed One alone knows!"—referring to *Chulla-Chaquinca*, the old Inca god of the forest, in the form of a man with one human and one jaguar foot. "A man must be a fool to plant rubber trees, and to give them the care of children, when the great forest is full of them."

That evening, in answer to Tono's signal, the little flotilla drew in to the river-bank and tied up for the night at an old Indian clearing. Camp was made about the ruins of a large *moloco*, or communal house, peculiar to the Amazon tribes.

The mighty Tono strode about shouting orders in a loud voice, ready with a blow for any laggard, anxious to show off before the girl. He had not forgotten the incident on the dock at Manaos.

"Lively there, you hungry one!" he boomed. "Work if you would eat. Move with my voice, or you feel the weight of my hand. Pass up those boxes of provisions."

The young American, walking up the bank toward the old Indian house, did not even look around.

"You heard me!" roared Tono in savage anger, leaping before him. "You understood my orders!"

"Certainly I heard you!"—in steady voice, eying Tono boldly. "But I never dreamed that you were bawling at me, black one."

Tono's dark face went suddenly darker. "You are hired help here," he shouted.

"Not your help."

"To obey me and my orders when you travel with my boats."

"Listen, Tono." It was the girl speaking softly in Portuguese, appearing suddenly between the two belligerents. "This North American is not exactly a field-hand."

"Senhorita Anita," protested Tono vehemently, "I am in command—"

She waved him aside with her small hands.



"Dios!" Tono's dark countenance went black. "No man ever struck Tono and lived to boast of it."

"A white man, Tono," said she, "and he must be treated white."

"Thanks," smiled the white man. "It is nice of you to remember that."

She flushed a bit to recall what she had said of him back there on the docks.

"A shave didn't do you any hurt," she said in good American. "What is your name?"

"Hugh Hamilton."

"You must have a gift for alliterative invention," she smiled.

"It happens to be my real name."

"Well, Hugh, you certainly look much better, and decidedly less villainous."

"Thanks."

"Don't be sullen, or we won't get along," she warned. "You are a white man, at least on the outside, and you will be treated white as long as you act white."

"Thanks again."

"Come on up to the main camp with us."

"Are you sure that I will be welcome there?"

"We three Americans, alone in a tropical wilderness," said she, "must pull together."

She turned away with Hugh, leaving the jealous Tono growling. He worked off his rage by hurling dynamite at the fishes, killing a giant *pícarucu*, almost as large as

a man, from which thick white steaks were cut for the evening meal.

Night. Red fires leaped up on the river-bank, and long sinuous flames danced in the dark, the orange shadows flickering far out over the water. About them moved the ghostly forms of busy men. On the river-bank, silhouetted against the lighter water like an ebony statue, stood the canoe guard with a rifle in his hands.

With increasing darkness came a noisy splashing of great fish and queer river beasts. Restless p a r -



rots roosting in the trees beat their wings and squawked in alarm as a band of nocturnal monkeys swung through the upper branches in their endless search for food. Great bats careened in the dusky air. Not so far away upriver a hunting jaguar shook the night with fearsome coughing grunts.

About a large campfire before the old communal house the arrogant Tono entertained his guests with his own renown and importance.

"I go where few men dare," he boasted. "I brave the wilderness and defy the *infieles*. Rubber is only for the bold. The bravest men in the world are the wild rubber gatherers, and Tono is king of them all."

"It requires a man," sighed the girl, "to harvest that kind of crop."

"I have been farther into the wilderness than any man alive," boomed Tono. "I alone of all men have seen the upper reaches of the Ituxy, flowing down into the Rio Puru."

"Other men have been there," said Hamilton quietly. "I would like to know who?" demanded Tono.

"I have been there."

"You, leading a rubber-hunting expedition up the Rio Puru!" Tono roared with laughter.

"I did not say that I was hunting rubber."

"Then what *were* you doing there?"

"Trying to get out!"

Wilson saw that hot words were leading to a quarrel so he hastened to change the subject.

"This is the natural home of the rubber tree," he observed. "That explains why I am here. Some day much

of this forested land will be cleared and planted to great rubber orchards, of new and better trees, giving many times the latex of your wild trees."

"There is no such thing as tame rubber for this country," argued Tono. "It is a waste of time and money to plant tame rubber trees where more grow wild than anyone will ever need."

"The wild trees will soon be exhausted by your destructive methods."

"There is enough to last forever!" laughed Tono.

"That is what men have always said of wild things," answered Wilson. "A few years ago there was an inexhaustible supply of wild trees for lumber in America, enough to last forever, and now the end is near. It will be so with rubber. Every hevea tree you fellows find you cut down and bleed to death. That can have but one ending."

"More trees grow; always there are more," maintained Tono.

"Gramp is right, as usual," said Anita, addressing her remarks to Hugh in English, more to hear her own native speech, and to arouse this silent stranger from his deep reverie, than to prolong the

argument. "The future of this Amazon country is tame rubber. It is a mistake to think that this is not a white man's country. It really is beautiful up where we are going. You will like it there."

"I will like it anywhere you are," replied Hugh. "That is why I came."

CHAPTER III

AT dawn a troop of howling monkeys paraded in the near-by tree-tops and set the forest reverberating with their loud and mournful cries.

The camp came to life. Axes thudded; fires crackled merrily. Loud voices of shouting men and noisy laughter drowned out the low whispering voice of the river. A startling, nerve-tightening rifle-shot as the canoe guard fired at an overbold manatee, the water-cow, a curious river beast; but it submerged in time and disappeared unharmed, much to the disappointment of the men, who relish its beefy flesh.

Coming out of the old Indian house, Wilson found Hamilton standing there on the bank looking longingly at the leaden river, over which the pale night mists still hung like a gauzy veil.

"Cheer up," greeted Max in all friendliness; "it's much better than this where we are going—you will like it up there."

"I had a bad night," confessed Hugh. "Uneasy dreams." The older man stared at him with questioning eyes, a bit disappointed.

"You are afraid?" he asked anxiously.

"No. Nothing can frighten me, not now."

A custom peculiar to all frontiers, the world over, does not permit one to ask a stranger too many questions.

"I will not try to hide the facts," said Max. "I urged you to come because you showed spunk and courage back there on the docks. There is danger—"

"Of course," nodded Hugh. "Always is, here in the jungle."

"But not the kind of danger you think, not the wilderness perils you hear so much about in the river towns—the poisonous snakes, which are scarce, or man-eating jaguars, which I never have seen. But—" He hesitated.

"But what?" asked Hugh.

"I don't know. Men have died up there—rather strangely, white men as well as brown. We all have had two or three narrow escapes lately from—from accidents. This explains why I was so anxious to find a white man, why I coaxed you to come along. I was rather taken with your nerve."

"My nerves are rather jumpy right now," Hugh replied.

"It is only fair to warn you," sighed Wilson. "You can go back if you want to."

Just then Anita came out, and Hugh watched her fine head lifted to the gold of the early morning sun, gold upon gold, and her slender boyish figure stretched to its full height, shapely arms uplifted like an Inca priestess greeting the sun god.

"I don't want to go back," said he.

"The kind of field labor we must put up with is hard to hold," continued Wilson. "We have to watch them all the time. Our savage neighbors have been troublesome of late. Another white man will help out wonderfully."

A detail of hunters was in pursuit of the noisy howlers and their dull rifle-shots boomed back to the camp from no great distance. Parrots were cawing, flashing yellow and green. A pair of large red and orange macaws passed overhead, high and fast, calling down in hoarse protest at this invasion. The morning meal was bacon and turtle eggs, hard bread and coffee for the whites—monkey meat, farinha and plantains for the others.

"Homesick?" asked Anita, noting that the strange youth was very quiet.

"No," said he. "I left home because I was sick."

"It couldn't have been a very serious complaint," she laughed.

"Mostly sick of doing nothing. I wanted adventure—"

"You certainly came to the right place!"

"And there was something I didn't seem to be able to find back home."

"My goodness, but you are mysterious!"

"I have found it," said he, "where I least expected to."

"You're over my head," she sighed. "Anyway," she added, giving up the enigma, "you have found friends."

"And an enemy," he added.

"You mean Tono?" she laughed. "He's a great big bear, but a tame one. We've known him a long time. Tono roars loud and talks big, but he is quite harmless."

"I am not so sure of that!"

That day's journey was like the one preceding, and very like others yet to come, except that Hamilton was invited to share the shade and comfort of the lead canoe, where he sat beside the elderly botanist and learned about rubber.

Hamilton was soon to know why a man of Wilson's ability and learning should bury himself in the Amazon wilderness, and expose a young girl to all the dangers of the frontier. He was one of those men in love with his work, who thought of it, and little else, every waking minute of the day, and dreamed about it at night. The money invested, the dangers involved, in this hazardous undertaking meant nothing to him.

"Several years ago," Wilson explained, "I

clearly indicated the possibilities of improving rubber-bearing plants by testing for unusual productive qualities and selecting seeds from only high-yielding strains. This is easily understood if you compare my work with the methods used to improve domestic cows, as both the rubber plant and the cow give milk. Low-producing and unprofitable cows are eliminated by testing. Better cows, giving more milk, and richer milk, are produced by selective breeding. By taking seed, or cuttings, only from high-yielding rubber trees, the flow of milk, or latex, will be increased and thus cheapen the cost of producing commercial rubber."

"It has been done with other trees and plants," agreed Hugh. "Why not with rubber?"

"I have accomplished exactly that," the ring of triumph in his low voice. "I suppose you are wondering why we came way out here for our experiments. I will tell you. There really was no other place. This is the natural home of the wild hevea trees, as well as many other latex-producing trees and shrubs and vines. Nearly all the commercial rubber plantations throughout the tropical world are planted with hevea trees, but nothing ever has been done until now to improve them. In the overflow lands of the lower Amazon it is impossible for a northerner to live and work the length of time necessary to produce and study these rubber trees. It was part of my plan to produce hevea trees that would grow in colder climates. This could be done only on higher ground, the very edge of the wild rubber country, in the rolling highlands of the Jaupery River, where it is much cooler, where the land is dry



A blow gun dart—a poisoned arrow! A savage was shooting from ambush!

and conditions in general somewhat similar to other countries nearer home, where rubber orchards are more desirable on account of labor and shipping. Up there grow wild countless thousands of rubber trees to be studied and tested and used for breeding purposes."

Max Wilson had been employed for many years by the Bureau of Plant Industry of the Department of Agriculture to investigate rubber-producing plants that might be grown in humid Florida or in the semi-arid Southwest. It was imperative that the United States find a source of rubber that could not be cut off by war, or controlled to the point of extortion by price-raising agreements among foreign growers.

"The hevea, or Para, rubber tree is the species that has been most extensively planted in the East and other tropical countries," explained Wilson. "It was supposed that these trees could be grown nowhere else but in the hot tropics. But I have found in the hills along the Jaupery wild hevea trees that are much more resistant to cold than has been supposed. From them I have developed a strain that I believe will grow readily in southern Florida and produce an unusual flow of latex."

CHAPTER IV

RIVER steamers going past cheered them. Once a black-faced engineer, hanging out of an open port-hole for a breath of air, saw the white faces under the *toldo* and called loudly in familiar American:

"Who won the series?"

No one could tell him.

"How did the election come out?"

They had no news for him.

"Well, anyway, it's a safe bet that the Yanks won," he grinned as the steamer sloshed past, throwing out sparks and blue wood-smoke.

"Around the next bend," said Anita late one afternoon, and not without gladness in her voice, "is the Jaupery, and then our plantation."

A flood of olive-green water pouring into the black, green islands, densely wooded, gray sandbars, tentacled snags, the grim skeletons of forest giants dragged down and drowned, glistening granite rocks upthrust. Another large river, though not of the imposing dimensions of the Negro. The Jaupery flowed down out of the northeast, rising in the unknown unexplored wilderness of the mountains on the southern border of British Guiana, one of the least known rivers flowing into the Amazon basin. No river towns upon its forested banks. No steamers on its rough waters, broken by numerous rapids, whirlpools and waterfalls. Seldom frequented by the rubber gatherers, because this northern forest, on higher, dryer ground, was not so populous with the wild rubber trees; nor were they so easily accessible to canoes.

Through one of the rapid channels the long canoes pushed into a broad river, flowing much faster than the Negro. Soon a boiling rapid barred the way, the green water beaten to a white froth against black wet rocks. Showering the dense jungle wall with rifle bullets as a precaution against any savages lurking there for just such an opportunity, Tono brought the canoes to shore. With long liana ropes the heavy boats were dragged up through the rapids. At one place of high cliffs and threatening whirlpools the canoes had to be unloaded and dragged over the rocks on wooden rollers. Above this

rapid the water became as smooth and gentle as an inland lake, a very beautiful lake, with many tiny green islands buttressed with gray rock. And against the western shore the gray limestone towered in a high forest-clad cliff. Dark green hills rolled away to the north. Here was no overflow land, no swamps, and consequently no swarms of mosquitoes and other insect pests such as make life almost unendurable in the hot lowlands.

The Wilson plantation proved to be a large rectangular clearing cut from the dense green forest, extending along the eastern river-bank for more than a mile. Originally it had been a sizable clearing, laboriously hewn and burned out of the forest with stone axes and slow fires, to make a place where the native women could raise their primitive vegetables. This clearing had been enlarged, both for defensive purposes and for the raising of rubber trees. It was, indeed, a beautiful bit of country: The broad river and the low hills; live springs and flowing brooks; giant shade trees and green grass; flowers and fruits. The rising land was at an elevation sufficient to afford complete drainage, and the nights were cool compared with the sultry heat of the lower Amazon country.

As the boats rode up to the landing, Hugh Hamilton could see a sizable bungalow standing apart on a height of land between two enormous caoutchouc trees high on their buttressed yellow roots, and down by the river-bank, near the docking, were the necessary buildings for such an enterprise. Here was a small latex house, where the rubber "milk" was coagulated and made into sheets, and a *defumadore*, or curing building, where the sheets of new rubber were smoked to a deep amber color. Here also was a storehouse, strongly built for defensive purposes, if necessary, and a long boathouse where the river craft could be locked up to prevent theft. As an additional precaution each boat was securely chained to iron rings let into a great rock. To the right a short distance, near the main bungalow, was a smaller grass-thatched hut, and down near the river was the large *moloço*, or communal house, where the laborers were sheltered.

Only a small portion of this clearing was set out to rubber trees, of different ages and sizes of growth, ranging all the way from trees producing their first "milk," to tiny seedlings in nursery rows. The production of rubber was, as Wilson had explained, of secondary importance

here. Trees were tapped, milk collected and rubber produced, but only to test the flow of latex and the quality of rubber from pedigreed trees. Portions of the clearing were utilized to grow the food necessary for so many people, including corn, yams, potatoes, tropical fruits, and many familiar vegetables brought down from home.

"Hark to a man who knows," said the mighty Tono, as the landing was made. "If you desire to keep these fly-by-nights, you'd better burn all your boats!"

He glared insolently at the white man before him.

"I will never run from you," said Hugh. "Hei-hei!" cried Tono. "And what do you mean by that?"

He stepped closer, threateningly, fingering his silver-handled machete.

"Chew on those words, Howler Monkey, and decide their flavor for yourself."

This insolent *Norteamericano* was alone; he had nothing but his clenched fists; this was the wilderness, Tono's country—now was the time.

"By all the yellow-tailed devils—"



The girl was quickly between them again, as though she had been anticipating this very thing, pushing Tono back.

"No quarrels here," she warned. "Help is too scarce. There is enough to fight up here without brawling among ourselves. You, Tono, back! Put up that machete, or war will break out in Brazil almost immediately."

She wound this big giant of a man about her small fingers easily enough. But Hugh, watching them both carefully, knew that this giant was playing another and more subtle game. Instinctively each of these two men recognized a dangerous rival in the other. Tono, laughing, retreated before the magic touch of those small fingers upon his great arm, but Hugh realized that this was but a truce. Tono was ever a lawless knight of the flowing road who would stop at nothing.

"Some day I will get these big hands upon his neck," growled Tono.

"Don't forget, Tono," smiled the girl, "that little hands upon the trigger of a gun are more dangerous than your big paws with a machete."

"What!" he roared good-naturedly. "You wouldn't shoot your uncle Tono!"

"If you start trouble here, with these new men," she warned, "it might easily end by all of us getting shot."

"*Dios!* I believe you would!"

Hugh, watching her closely, knew that she would if the moment ever came when shooting was necessary.

"You, Hamilton," she said in English, which further angered Tono because he could not understand, "you are to rank as assistant foreman here. Take charge of the men until Barry Sperling comes. Tono is right about the boats. They must be locked up and chained up, and all the paddles removed to the big house, or we won't have any help here tomorrow morning. These men fear the wilderness more than they fear hard work—which is saying a lot."

"I will look after the boats," said he.

A tall thin figure in white topped with a cork helmet came striding down toward them.

"English," guessed Hugh, taking in the square jaw, the bushy brows, the hawk nose.

"Our overseer," announced Anita. "Barry, this is Hugh Hamilton; we brought him up to be your assistant."

"Surprised!" cried Sperling with a mirthless laugh. "My word, yes! Didn't even know that I needed an assistant."

The girl could see that the man was hurt, and hastened to explain.

"It isn't that you actually need an assistant," said she. "But Gramp thought he needed a white man to guard his precious trees and look after things in general until we can get away."

"Righto!" agreed Barry, making the best of it. "Assistant overseer sounds bully. We'll get along great."

Sperling was a man schooled to good breeding and the accepted rules of conventional society, smiling when he was supposed to smile, mouthing the accepted pleasantries of an introduction, repeating the usual phrases, regardless of his own thoughts and feelings.

THEY shook hands like friendly enemies, with formal mutterings, as strange men will who must work together, each searching for weaknesses to explain why the other was at the jungle edge.

"Suppose you have handled natives," began Sperling.

"No," confessed Hugh, "not in plantation work."

"Great day! Then you have something to learn."

"Lots," agreed Hugh, smiling.

"This job means getting along with a lot of rough-

necks," Sperling observed, attempting a bit of American slang.

"I get along well with wild men as a rule," said Hugh.

Sperling arched his bushy brows in surprise at this unexpected answer.

"Know anything about rubber?" he asked.

"Very little."

"I thought so. I guess the old man hired you more for a personal bodyguard than anything else." His tone was a bit ugly, even though his thin lips were still smiling.

"He didn't even intimate to me that he needed a bodyguard."

"We're all on our guard here—have to be," Sperling explained. "Our own men can't be trusted out of sight. The jungle hides murderous savages who'd like nothing better than sticking you with a poisoned arrow and smoking your head for a souvenir."

"You tell me no news," said Hugh, still smiling amiably.

"Of course not. You Yankees always know everything!"

"I have learned a great deal about the Amazon forest very recently."

"You certainly look as though they didn't feed you any too well at that school," laughed Sperling.

"They didn't."

"Down and out, eh?"

"Down, but not out," corrected Hugh.

"Can work when you've got to, I suppose."

"I can," said Hamilton, determined not to quarrel with this man.

"Well, you won't find this any Sunday-school picnic," he warned as he turned away.

HUGH overlooked this first antagonism, which seems to be common among men of position, the world over, when a newcomer threatens their jobs. For the next few minutes Sperling was busy directing the work of unloading the boats and putting the stores safely under lock and key. Then he turned again to Hugh with more questions.

"What are you doing up here, anyway?" he asked.

"I might ask the same of you."

"I put my money in rubber. I am here trying to get some of it out."

"Luck to you!"

"When I come into my own back there,"—jerking a thumb in the direction of far-away England,—"I'll get out of here mighty quick."

With this broad hint that here was a man to be looked up to by down-and-out Yankees wandering in far countries, Sperling turned aside to the new laborers, a heavy cane in his right fist. He was arrogant and contemptuous in word and manner.

"Don't any of you poor fools try to run away," he warned. "Out there in the forest the wild Mangaromas are waiting for just such innocents. Keep out of that river unless you have a good big boat, or the *piranhas* will eat you up alive. And don't try any funny business around here, or you'll be shot down like the beasts you are."

"Run these hungry beggars up to the big *moloço*," he ordered Hugh, "and see that they are decently fed for once."

Hugh didn't like the tone of the man's voice, but he said nothing. He was naturally friendly to everyone, and here in the wilds he needed friends and company. He was certain that the overseer's half-hidden animosity, greened with a bit of jealousy, would wear away with better acquaintance. Wherever he went, among all kinds of people, even the wildest savages, Hugh Hamilton was one of those

men who quickly make friends.

"Then you can make yourself at home," laughed Sperling, "in those little two-by-four rooms over the storehouse."

"I have had less comfort lately."

Sperling stared hard at him; something in the young man's voice hinted that this was not exactly a confession of weakness. . . .

Two small rooms, simply furnished, but promising more comfort and shelter than Hugh had enjoyed in many months. He sat down on an iron cot in the smaller room, tired, a bit confused, trying to think.

"There is something wrong here," he muttered, half aloud. "But I don't know what!"

He had come there on the impulse of the moment, half sick, without any plans, exhausted, prompted by some inner urge that now seemed close to folly. Wilson already had forgotten him. Sperling did not treat him as an equal. To this blonde girl he was but another one of the help who happened to have a white skin, and was therefore to be placed above the browns and blacks.

That night, with so much to think about, his fevered mind was like a crazy thing, fighting the unconsciousness of sleep, as though sleep itself were dangerous. And, when exhaustion became semi-stupor, time whirled backward and he lived again, real as life itself, through the jungle horrors of the immediate past. A ragged, half-starved, unarmed white man, running through a great open forest, beneath a high green roof so dense and thick no sunlight reached the dank earth below, and no undergrowth was possible. And sniffing down that hot trail behind him in the shadows was a great spotted cat. Like a hunted fox before the hounds the man doubled and twisted and turned to break that inevitable, invisible trail of scent behind him, down which trotted death. And the incredible jest of it all was that he, who had come there to hunt those very jaguars, now was being hunted by one himself!

CHAPTER V

SHORTLY after daylight Tono and his men fired a loud *feu-de-joie* and shouted their hoarse farewells as they paddled away upriver to their wild-rubber gathering.

For all these men seemed to care, it might have been a pleasant picnic party going to the woods for a happy day, instead of an armed expedition into the wilderness of the prowling jaguar, the giant anaconda and the head-hunting savage.

Here was no hint of all this, no promise of danger. A pleasant pastoral scene of young orchards, small cultivated fields of corn and potatoes, upland rolling high to wooded green hills. A pair of bluish-black toucans, with grotesque orange beaks, flew over. Stingless yellow bees droned among the bright flowers. Unusual bird voices were calling from the forest edge. Large blue and yellow macaws love-making in a low palm tree. Screaming little



A withered old
Mangaroma
stepped reluctantly
out. "Have no
fear!" called
Hamilton.

parrakeets in flocks. And the still summer air was flecked with superb butterflies in orange, scarlet, lustrous blues and velvet purple. It was not hot; and every night brought a penetrating chill before dawn that made a blanket necessary.

Quite naturally, as one will in a strange place, the first thing Hugh did was to wander out to look over the plantation and the work. He knew little or nothing about the actual growing of rubber. He walked through a sizable planting of hevea trees large enough to tap, which had been newly sliced, and the white "milk" was dripping into the latex cups. He came out into a nursery of little hevea seedlings in carefully tended rows. Here a dozen naked muscular backs—yellow, brown, black—marked where the new men were fighting with their bright hoes to keep the green jungle from springing up again to smother the little trees almost in a single day.

"So here is where you outnature Nature," he greeted Wilson, who was busy with a budding-knife.

"These are my children," smiled Max. "These little trees represent years of research, hard work and loving care."

"They look like ordinary rubber trees to me."

"They are not," explained the botanist. "It is what you can't see, the white latex running under the outer bark, that makes these particular trees so valuable."

Anita came over from the other side of the field to explain that by a careful system of selection and cross-breeding they had produced this line of new rubber trees that would give much more of the latex, or sap, than ordinary wild trees.

"These young seedlings," she explained, "are all being budded from the parent trees, making many trees out of one, so we will have a large stock for shipment. We would

be taking too many chances to ship that one tree. We are certain that these new trees, budded on mountain stock, will grow anywhere south of actual frost."

This, as Wilson added, was the final step. He had produced the tree, the most wonderful and valuable rubber tree in the world, and now they were obtaining a large number of these new trees for shipment.

"When these little trees are large enough to dig up and pack, then you will go home," said Hugh.

"Of course," answered Anita. "It has been wonderful here, a great adventure, but—"

"But hardly the country, or the life, for a young American girl," he finished.

"One gets used to danger after long acquaintance," she smiled. "I do not feel afraid any more."

"I know," said he.

She stared at him curiously. "You look as though your greatest danger, of late, had been starvation," she tested.

"It was," he admitted.

"You shall have a special diet for a few days to build you back up to full strength," she promised.

"No need to bother with me."

"Yes, there is," she insisted. "You will need all your health and strength here, and we need you. It would be too bad if anything happened to these new trees now after the hard work is all done."

SHE was busy, and turned again to her task among the trees; and Hugh, his mind full of her, went toward the forest. He did not particularly notice that the planted rubber trees, the garden patches, everything, was a considerable distance away from the forest edge, nor sense why this was so until Sperling called to him.

"Hey there, you!" cried Sperling in alarm. "Get back away from the jungle wall!"

"Why?" Hugh asked.

"Mangaromas; that's why!" shouted Sperling.

"There are no savages here now."

"A lot you know about it," scoffed Sperling as he came striding toward him.

"I know that if there were any wild men hiding here in the forest, those parrots would be scolding in alarm."

"Gad, you'll learn what's hiding in there some day," promised Sperling, "if you get a poisoned arrow in your ribs!"

"Have they ever actually shot at you?"

"I'll say!"

"Why don't you try to make peace with them?"

"As well try to make peace with the jaguars!"

"That seems the general idea throughout this Amazon country," argued Hugh. "No one ever tries it. These wild men are no different than any other savages; peace with them is possible and will have to come some day."

"Well, well, my little diplomat," sneered Sperling, "you have my permission to go and try it!"

"Just what do you mean by that?" asked Hugh.

"I was only warning you. One of those little splinters from a blowgun will change your opinion of the Mangaromas."

He strode away on his long legs, as though abandoning Hugh to his fate. This was indeed Mangaroma country. A few small native villages scattered through a great green forest, hardly more than independent family groups. A savage people, still in the stone age, constantly at war with the whites. The white men controlled the rivers, where their great smoking boats traveled with tremendous speed and power, and their always-shooting guns reached out to incredible distances with swift death. But the great green forest still was savage; the white men dared not venture there, except in force and well armed with their noisy

death. A raid on the Wilson plantation was improbable but there was real danger that a warrior might be hiding at the edge of the jungle, ready to let fly a poisoned arrow if anyone was careless enough to come within range.

LATER in the day Sperling seemed to repent his boorishness and sought Hugh in a more friendly mood. "Why should a young man like you bury himself in this damnable wilderness?" he asked.

"I had a reason," answered Hugh. "It seemed very important at the time."

"One guess," laughed Sperling. "You saw Anita standing on the dock, and after seeing so many dark girls she seemed like an angel."

"Maybe that was it," said Hugh.

"She isn't any angel."

"I hardly expected that much."

"And as cold as this cursed country is hot."

"She is all business," admitted Hugh.

"It's a mighty unhealthy spot," said Sperling. "The quicker we get out of here the better."

"What is wrong with this spot?"

"My word, what a question! No one is safe here, not for a holy minute, for one thing. These field-hands are just a loose bunch of bandits, always plotting mischief, only waiting for a chance to steal everything and run away."

"Probably," agreed Hugh, "but they can't very well run away."

"And out yonder—with a wave of his thin hand toward the forest—"a lot of bloody head-hunters eying our top-pieces enviously."

"They will stay out there."

"Poisonous snakes are underfoot. Man-eating jaguars prowling around nights. Giant anacondas along the river large enough to swallow a man whole."

"Go right ahead," smiled Hugh, "and give the greenhorn in camp a good time; it's the custom."

"Think I am spoofing you?" grinned Sperling.

"I think you are trying to throw a big scare into me, hoping I will be frightened into running away; but I'm not easily frightened—not any more."

"You'll find out the truth all by your little self."

"I aim to."

"If you stay," Sperling added.

Very likely, Hugh decided, the man was trying to have a little fun with him, as is common enough in all frontier camps. But no sooner had he reached this decision, with Sperling hardly out of sight, before Wilson happened along to add to the mystery.

"You are not carrying a rifle," he greeted Hugh in surprise.

"No."

"Go and get one—never be without a rifle here."

"What do I need a rifle for?"

"There is danger here—"

"I have faced, unarmed, all the dangers this Amazon country can provide."

"I hired you as a guard, more than anything else," persisted Wilson. "What good is a guard without a rifle?"

"Who do I guard, and why and where and when?" inquired Hamilton.

"Well, for one thing, there have been too many accidents here already."

"Accidents?"

"Coincidences, if you prefer, things hard to explain. For instance, twice, in the last two weeks, I have been shot at with blowgun darts from the forest. My own fault, of course, getting too close. One hit my eyeglasses; the other failed to penetrate my notebook. Keep well back

from the forest edge, young man, if you want to see home again."

"I'd like to," smiled Hugh.

"You've got to watch the help too," continued Wilson. "Only a day or two ago some one filled my night water-jug with acid from the latex house."

"That was a premeditated accident!"

"It might have been serious if a tame monkey had not got loose in the night and tried to drink it."

It seemed there had been other accidents there. A white man had been killed while dynamiting fish in the river, presumably by his own carelessness in handling the high explosive. An educated Brazilian from Rio Janeiro who had come with them as an assistant plant culturist had been lost in the forest while collecting wild hevea seed, and never was heard of again.

As though the very place was cursed with misfortune, Hugh was soon to experience what might have been a very serious accident himself. He was the only one there who dared hunt the fresh meat they all craved; and late in the afternoon, when the day's work was over, he would take a small canoe and paddle upriver along the shore looking for game. In this way he shot many capybara and other large rodents, a few small deer, and numerous wild turkeys and pheasantlike game birds.

One evening when he seized his rifle suddenly to shoot at a small wild pig, the gun exploded in his hands. A third of the barrel was blown off; and the breech mechanism, including the heavy bolt, whizzed close enough to his head to bruise his right ear. At first he thought this was the result of a defective cartridge, but when he recovered the piece of barrel where it had plopped into the mud of the river-bank, he discovered the real cause: the barrel had been plugged with mud.

"My own negligence," he thought—for this is a common enough hunting accident. He had been in and out of the canoe several times to pick up the game he had shot, and once or twice had laid the gun down rather hurriedly. But when he examined the fragment more closely doubt came to trouble him.

The residue of mud in the broken barrel was black loam, whereas all the mud of the river-bank was yellow!

CHAPTER VI

"YOUR vitamins, sir!"

Every day, and often several times a day at first, Anita would surprise Hugh at odd moments between meals by bringing him special things to eat—precious candy, tinned milk, cakes, appetizing dainties she prepared especially for him.

"I wish you wouldn't," he protested.

He would have refused this food and special service except that it offered about the only opportunity he had to see her, to be with her, to hear her voice.

"It's a duty," she laughed.

"You tempt me to secret starvation so that it may continue forever," said he. "This is about the only time I see you."

"I should think that you'd enough of hunger."

"Yes, but not enough of you!"

They were in the supply-house, where Hugh was getting out a case of tools. Anita handed him a glass of tinned milk, and he drank it hurriedly, not caring for the taste, and then he ate the two sandwiches while they laughed and talked and joked.

"See how much better you look already!" said she.

"Thanks to you."

Sperling's shadow darkened the open doorway.

"Oh, hello!"—attempting something of surprise in his voice. "I didn't know you were here."

But his words lacked the ring of truth, and Hugh felt, rather than knew, that the man had hurried over there purposely to interrupt.

"Feeding the animals," laughed Anita.

"Mind if I have a cake?" Sperling helped himself as though determined to share her service.

"Have some milk too," begged the girl.

"No, thanks," said the Englishman. "That tinned stuff tastes and looks too much like latex to appeal to me."

BARRY SPERLING came of a well-known family, better bred than supplied with wealth, and he was the youngest of several sons, of a long line of men who had lived too long upon the labor of others to learn much about work themselves. He had lost a job in French Africa before coming to Brazil. Given a free hand there on a big rubber plantation, he had driven the conscript blacks like slaves, exacting the last ounce of their strength, to get the last pound of rubber. Then the voodoo-doctors put the spell of death upon him. Accidents and strange coincidents began to occur. He found poisonous snakes in his path, in his house, in his very bed. A spear whizzed past him in the dark. Fear shook him at last, and he turned upon the blacks so viciously, so cruelly, that the government was forced to interfere and the laborers were taken away after an investigation. This in itself was failure.

He went to British Guiana to manage another rubber company, but the easy life in Georgetown proved too big an attraction and he lost that job. With two other drifters before the winds of adversity he organized a shady rubber company, selling stock in England, to start a big plantation in Brazil. It failed so quickly and so thoroughly, and his companions had looted everything so cleverly and completely before they disappeared between two suns, that Sperling was left stranded in Manaos. Then came Max Wilson and a job—Max Wilson and a girl! He wanted this girl and he needed the job!

"You baby that fellow too much." Sperling's voice betrayed jealousy as he walked away with Anita.

"Why, Barry, he was about starved to death!"

"Who is he? Where did he come from? What is he doing way down here? Why was he broke, down and out, actually starving?"

"I'm sure I don't know, Barry."

"That's just it!" he retorted. "No one knows anything about the man. If you did, you probably would kick him off the place."

"I only know that he was in rags, exhausted, sick, starved—"

"And you in the rôle of the Good Samaritan!" he laughed. "Don't let sympathy run away with your judgment."

"I shall not judge him by his looks. As long as he behaves himself here, I shall treat him like a white man."

Sperling sulked by himself for the rest of the day, being one of those dangerous men who nurse their grievances, real or fancied, and are always planning to get even for imaginary wrongs. But that evening, when he met Hugh, he appeared friendly enough.

"This is a hell of a place for a white man," he observed mopping his red face after a hot day in the sun.

"I've seen worse places," said Hugh, "and hotter."

"Devil a doubt of it!"

"I like it here."

"Oh, you do, eh? I say, you haven't been here long enough to know it yet, or you'd hate it cordially. The lonesomeness will get you after a bit, or the heat, or the bugs, or the blue devils. And if they don't, there is al-

ways the constant presence of danger to destroy a fellow's nerves."

"I'm used to all that. You aren't trying to frighten me away, are you?"

The accuracy of this guess was fairly startling. "Of course not!"

"Don't. I've been through a lot lately, and I don't frighten easily any more."

"You will find real danger here."

"It won't be like meeting a total stranger," smiled Hugh. "If your courage is a bit low, I have something I found in the stores hidden under the bed that makes a low gurgling—"

"Of course, you know all about it. My word, yes," laughed Barry, but mirthlessly. "The wild savages, the dangerous beasts, the snakes, and everything—having read all about it in books."

"Forget it," said Hugh. "I have seen all that."

"A fine bunch of cut-throats I've been working with all day," pursued Sperling. "At the first opportunity they'll rush the place. When I was down in the lower field and got a bit too close to the jungle, seeking a bit of shade, one of those bloody savages took a shot at me with a blowgun."

"Never!" Hugh was really surprised.

"Here is the dart—bit o' death, eh? You may have it, but doubtless you'll collect a few such souvenirs yourself if you stay long enough."

"Oh, I intend to stay."

"Look out for the point!" as Hugh took the tiny arrow. "It is undoubtedly poisoned."

A small ten-inch splinter of bamboo, the needle-sharp business end stained a dark brown with some resinous stuff. Two-thirds down the shaft was twisted a bit of dirty cotton to make it fit airtight in the bore of the gun and to help it fly true. Barry, watching Hugh as he inspected this dangerous and deadly little dart, laughed to see that, for once, this humorous Yankee had nothing funny to say.

"The Amazon savages I knew," said Hugh thoughtfully, "did not use the blowgun in war."

"Did you know the Mangaromas?" asked Sperling.

"No."

"You will!"

A day or two later Anita found Hugh in the coagulating-room. The field-hands, under Sperling, were collecting the white latex from the tree cups, gathering it in numbered galvanized pails, and carrying it down to the coagulating-room. There were, of course, a number of trees producing an abundance of latex, although not up to the high standard Wilson had set, and on these he was conducting experiments in new methods of gashing and bleeding.

"Here is a bit of lunch for you," Anita announced, presenting a can of freshly opened evaporated milk, a clean glass, and a thick sandwich.

"I do wish you wouldn't bother," he protested, but mighty glad to see her.

"It's part of the contract," she teased. "It is so written in the bond. The Government demands that our laborers be well fed and decently clothed."

Because his hands were busy just then she placed the glass of milk on the ledge of the open window near by,

where it would be within easy reach when he was ready for it.

"I do appreciate it," said he, "and your coming here too."

This personal service, though there was excuse for it, galled the watching Sperling. Their blended voices, their happy laughter, stung him like whips. He thought she remained in the coagulating-house much longer than was necessary. When Hugh hurried over to the *defumadore* to regulate the smoking there, she followed, close by his side. Barry remembered with bitterness that before this Yankee came she used to be that way with him. To share her with another was torture.

"Drink your milk," commanded Anita, when they were back in the latex house. "Eat your lunch."

"In a minute." He was measuring out a beaker of acid to coagulate a trough of white latex.

"I've got to go now," said she. "You bring up the dishes when you come."

His mind was full of her as he poured the acid into the latex trough and mixed it slowly and carefully, watching the white liquid thicken into cream and then into a semi-solid quivering mass of rubber. This done, he turned toward the open window where his lunch waited, only to discover that the sandwich had vanished and a black hand was stealthily removing the glass of milk.

"Here, you!" he called.

He dashed outdoors to intercept the sneak-thief. Instead of running away, or trying to hide, the black boy stood there trembling, shaken with terror, ashen, his dark eyes fairly popping from his bullet head as he stared at the empty glass in his hand.

"Latex!" choked the boy, indicating the empty glass. "You gave me latex!"

He fell writhing to the ground, gasping, retching.

"It was nothing but tinned milk, you little fool!"

"Latex!"

The black boy's fright, at least, was real enough. Already he was groaning and screaming so that Sperling and a dozen of the field hands came running up. Sperling seized the empty glass and sniffed at it.

"It is latex!" he cried hoarsely.

Gulping the stolen drink hastily down, to escape before he was caught in the act, the black boy had swallowed a whole glass of raw latex before he discovered that it was not the tinned milk he craved; and now the strong acids of his stomach were coagulating it into a rubbery mass that could not be dislodged.

"This is a ghastly joke," said Sperling, "but I suppose you didn't know any better."

"Mustard!" cried Hugh. "Mustard, quick!"

The main house was a long distance away, but he sprinted for it like a trained runner, leaving Sperling there to administer what first aid he could to the stricken boy. Hugh realized that the gastric juices, strongly acid, would coagulate that rubber milk in the boy's stomach just as quickly and thoroughly as the acid he used in the latex troughs.

"Anita, quick, mustard!" he called. "One of the boys has drunk latex!"



The man was snuffing powder through the hollow leg-bone of a deer.

"There isn't any mustard," she said in a hollow voice. "And if there was, it would be too late to save him."

CHAPTER VII

BUCK up man!" Sperling was making a studied effort to comfort Hugh. "What does one dead nigger amount to in this country?"

"A black man, it is true, but a man—"

"One never knows how a practical joke is going to turn out. Often enough it isn't so funny."

"I wasn't trying to be funny."

"Tinned milk and latex look exactly alike," continued Sperling, a bright light in his watery eyes that might have been secret amusement at Hugh's discomfiture. "Probably you didn't know enough about rubber to realize that your little joke was so deadly."

"I tell you again that I didn't even think of such a trick."

"Well," laughed Sperling, unbelief in his rasping voice, "some one certainly did—the boy is dead!"

"Some one changed that milk to latex," said Hugh.

"I hope you don't think I was trying to kill you," Anita turned upon him sharply.

"Of course not!" echoed Sperling.

"And I don't want either of you to go on thinking that I was trying to be funny," protested Hugh. "Some one put that latex there for me to drink."

"No," cried Anita in alarm. "That couldn't be!"

"It could be," agreed Sperling. "A careful search for murderers among the field-hands doubtless would reveal half a dozen or more."

"Truth to that," agreed Hugh, "and some of them were carrying latex right past that window."

"Devil a doubt but they are plotting against us every minute," added Sperling. "I told you so before. After all, they are only one jump ahead of real savages."

"I never considered their plotting and scheming any more serious than an attempt to steal a boat and run away," said Anita.

"They hate us all—all the whites," corrected Sperling.

"But, they always have been pleasant enough to me." Hugh was still bewildered.

"Cunning rascals," said Sperling, "and they know just enough about rubber to try just such a dangerous trick to get an unsuspecting white man."

IN spite of his firm denials Hugh felt, down in his heart, that Anita still believed he had attempted a foolish and dangerous practical joke on a childish black boy.

The latex room, he remembered, had been vacant a few minutes after the glass of milk was put on the window ledge. The field-hands were coming and going. Easy enough for one of them to reach up in passing and empty the glass, hastily refilling it from his pail of latex. The dead boy had been one of them. He had seen Anita carrying tinned milk to Hugh every day. He had stolen things



"Have no fear," said Hugh. "My magic is all-powerful. I stand between you and this black man."

to eat and drink before. His petty thieving had, unquestionably, saved Hugh's life at the cost of his own.

The mystery was only intensified later when he walked out into the field near the workers. He could almost feel the hatred and animosity of the men. He greeted them friendly enough, as always, but instead of the usual broad smiles and cheerful calls, they glared at him in stony silence that was of itself a threat.

"These men certainly think that I did it," decided Hugh. "They'll welcome a chance for revenge—their code is a life for a life. I'll have to be on my guard."

And then, still puzzling over this strange incident, it came to him forcibly that these simple-minded half-savages knew little of the subtleties of acting. Their emotions were always plainly written on their faces. They hid guilt only with silence and denials, subterfuges and contradictory lies. They could not pretend such hatred as this. If one of them had put the latex in the glass, some of the others certainly would know about it, and then there wouldn't be any excuse for this sudden hatred and open animosity.

For the next few days Hugh was much alone. Anita did not bring him any more lunches. He had no excuse to go up to the big house. His work did not take him out into the fields where she was during the cool of the day. He saw very little of her and never alone.

"You'll get used to dead men after a while," chuckled Sperling, as though secretly enjoying this torment.

"I have seen a lot of them," admitted Hugh, "and I am not used to the sight yet."

Max Wilson was friendly enough, when Hugh chanced to encounter him, and he correctly guessed that Anita had not told her grandfather of the incident, to save his creative mind from unnecessary worry and annoyance. . . .

"Where is your rifle?"

The unsuspected presence of Anita behind him, as he stood alone upon the river-bank, staring thoughtfully toward the river flowing down toward home, startled Hugh out of reverie. He fairly jumped to the scolding tone of her unexpected voice.

"Why—why," he stammered, "I left it standing somewhere."

"Left it standing—somewhere!" she repeated, with a hopeless shake of her fine head.

"I'm afraid I'm not a very good guard. I guess you will have to shoot me at sunrise."

"Don't you ever step arm's-length away from that rifle again while you are here."

"If I had even dreamed that you were in any danger—"

"It is you that are in danger!" she cried. "Oh, Hugh, don't you realize that these men are watching and waiting for just such a careless moment to get you?"

"I wasn't worried." In fact, he was both pleased and flattered that she thought about him at all.

"Well, then, if you don't care about yourself, try and think about the rest of us once in a while."

"I think about *you* all the time," he said.

SHE flushed and assumed a more authoritative tone to put him back in his place.

"You're on guard here."

"From now on," he declared.

"The more I think about that glass of latex, the less I like it. Frankly, I don't believe you attempted any practical joke."

"Thanks."

"If there is a cunning murderer at large here, we must all be careful. Get your rifle and keep it always with you. From now on it will be your special duty to guard yourself, and the rest of us."

When she left, rather hurriedly, Hugh found his rifle and began a slow patrol of the clearing, remembering to keep well back from the green barrier of the jungle, as Sperling had cautioned him, though a more peaceful and harmless scene could not be imagined. The late afternoon sunlight was a slanting flood of soft golden light, bringing out the deep green of the thrifty rubber trees. There was a ruddy flush to the broad leaves of the banana plants, and ragged palms stood motionless against the sky. Silken butterflies of gaudy hues flashed about the young hevea trees, and happy bird voices called musically from this man-made clearing where their natural enemies seldom dared venture.

The dark green wall of the jungle was not menacing, nor even suggestive of hidden danger, and no warning sound came from the hidden depths. Hugh stood safely back, day-dreaming, thinking of Anita and the future, when out of the corner of his eye he saw a green branch move, ever so slightly, at the edge of the matted jungle, though no wind stirred. An instinctive sense of caution, begotten in the hard school of danger, whirled him about, rifle ready, to face any threat from that direction, just as a small white object sped toward him like some strange insect flying with incredible speed. As one jumps involuntarily to avoid a stinging wasp he dodged, and it whizzed past his face, a little white dab of a thing, unrecognizable, but exciting curiosity. As his eyes followed the swift flight, it struck the ground beyond him with an audible sound.

A ripple of terror shook him: He had stood close to death!

Sticking there in the black dirt at the base of a young rubber tree was a tiny arrow, scarce larger than a knitting needle, a white dab of cotton at one end, death at the other.

"A blowgun dart! A poisoned arrow!" he gasped.

Sudden rage seized him; an assassin, a murderous savage, hiding there in the jungle, shooting poisoned darts from ambush! He jerked up his rifle and emptied it at the place where the green branch had moved. As the echoing shots died out of the still air, seeing nothing, hearing noth-

ing, he hastily reloaded and charged the green wall, desirous only of meeting this assassin face to face. The rank growth at the sun-drenched clearing edge hid everything from sight. Creepers entwined about his struggling legs; branches barred the way; thorns held him; but he tore his way through the matted green only to find the forest empty. Cooling down a bit, he realized the folly of such pursuit, to begin a careful search for tracks and sign, as a natural hunter will. The ground was soft and damp. If a man had stood there, he would leave some evidence of the fact. He swept aside some broken shoots, and there in the soft earth, instead of the track of splayed bare feet he expected to find, was the unmistakable mark of a boot.

"A white man!"

But when he examined this track more closely, he had to admit that this boot-track might not be so fresh. It was very difficult to tell, in that damp ground where the sun never reached, just how old such a track might be. Moreover some of the field-hands wore white man's brogans. And occasionally, as Hugh remembered, armed parties were led into the forest a short distance by Sperling to cut bamboos, to gather firewood and for other necessities. When he came out of the forest, dripping wet, shaking a bit with excitement, Sperling came running up with a rifle in his hands.

"Why all the fireworks?" he panted. "I heard you popping away and came on the run—thought, by the way you were shooting, that the whole Mangaroma nation was on us."

"Somebody shot at me with a blowgun!"

"That all?"

"It's enough!"

"Oh, you'll get used to that. But don't you ever jump in there again. You can't catch them. My word, no! Just give the red devils a round or two. Whizzing lead always puts fear into them even if a bullet doesn't actually reach home."

Anita and her grandfather came running up with their rifles.

"Where are they?" shouted Max. "Where are they?"

Sperling waved his hand to signify that there was no actual attack.

"A blowgun hunter just took a pot-shot at our Hugh," he explained. "He got scared, lost his head, dashed in there like a young fool trying to find them."

"I wasn't scared when I went in there," corrected Hugh.

"You were shaking like a leaf when you came out," affirmed Sperling.

"Probably I was," said Hugh. "I certainly was mad enough."

"You certainly were mad to dash in there," scolded Anita. "They easily could have speared you a dozen times."

Hugh stood looking critically at the tiny dart in his fingers. He noted that instead of the sticky brown gum-like poison, with which he was familiar, the business end of this little arrow was covered with a white frost of a strange crystallized substance.

"These savages about here," said he, "evidently use a special kind of poison."

"I suppose you are quite familiar with native poison mixtures?" said Sperling.

"Well,"—very thoughtfully,—"I have helped make it!"

CHAPTER VIII

BY no stretch of the imagination could Hugh connect this blowgun attack with the latex incident.

The latter could not have been the work of a wild man.

And it was equally improbable that any of the field-hands knew much about a blowgun, although unquestionably there was savage blood flowing in some of them. The long ten-foot tube is not easily concealed. It requires long practice to use one with any degree of accuracy. This deadly instrument of death is used only by the wildest tribes of the interior, almost exclusively for procuring meat, and its absolute silence adds materially to its efficiency. The hunter can stand concealed with a blowgun to his lips and bring down a number of monkeys before the others realize that death is near, or he can pick half a dozen turkeys out of a flock before the others even become suspicious. These guns are long, slender wooden tubes, with a bore of less than half an inch, and they are very accurate and deadly up to a hundred yards. The little arrows are carefully made and nicely balanced, and the needle points are treated with *jambi*, a very efficient poison made by boiling down the bark of a peculiar vine. A little of this injected into the blood-stream produces a swift and painless death. The blowgun is really a magnified long-range hypodermic needle, and the native poison is even more deadly than the bite of a rattlesnake—requires hardly more than a minute to kill the largest monkey.

EVEN supposing one of the field-hands had a blowgun, and knew how to use it, it was doubtful if the man could be hired to go alone in that threatening forest for any purpose whatsoever. Hugh had supposed himself well back out of ordinary blowgun range at the time, but one that shot an incredible distance might easily be explained as a better tube, or one used by a man with greater skill and lung-power.

"There is danger here," he admitted.

"That is not in the nature of a great discovery," grinned Sperling.

"Of course there is danger here," agreed Anita. "We've known that since the beginning."

"You make too much sympathetic capital out of the whole incident," added Sperling, taking his cue from her. "We have been shot at before, several times, and it did not scare us into hysterics. You will get used to it after a little."

"If they bother me," promised Hugh, "I am going right in there hunting for them. I am not afraid of the forest."

"It's just their fun-loving nature," grinned Sperling.

"Usually, if you leave them alone," said Hugh, "these savages will leave you alone."

"Oh, certainly!" sniffed Sperling. "You know all about wild men!"

"I ought to know something about them," smiled Hugh. "I lived with one of the wildest tribes for several months."

"My word!" cried Sperling. "The white king of the head-hunters! I suppose you married the chief's beautiful daughter—they always do in jungle stories."

"She wasn't very beautiful," smiled Hugh. "I didn't marry her. They thought I was a god."

"You certainly are amusing," laughed Sperling.

Anita had seen men before who had primitive ideas about making themselves attractive to females with tall stories of their masculine strength and courage, and she didn't believe a word of this.

"What were you doing out there in the jungle?" she asked, wondering how he would answer this plausibly.

"Trying to get out."

"Oh!"

"I got out," he added, "after a bit."

"That must have been when I first saw you. You certainly looked as though you had been in the jungle a long time."

"More than a year," he admitted.

"Go right ahead with your interesting travelogue," chuckled Barry. "We get very little good fiction this far from home."

"I presume that if I didn't have this blowgun dart," said Hugh, "you wouldn't believe that I was shot at a few minutes ago."

"Oh, yes," Anita was forced to admit. "It has happened here before. Gramp was shot at not long ago."

"I have a whole handful of such darts in my collection," added Barry.

"Well, we can't stand here all day talking about it," decided Anita. "There is work to be done. Keep away from the edge of the forest. We won't be here but a few days longer, anyway. Gramp announced this morning that in a few days more the trees will be ready to dig, and then we can go away from here forever."

"Good Lord!" cried Sperling in astonishment. "I supposed we would be here a long time yet."

"Just a few days more," she explained. "So don't take any unnecessary chances."

Sperling stood there in smiling silence, but Hugh could see that the man was bearing up under bad news.

"Savages—blowguns—death," said Sperling, lips tense, face drawn into hard lines, voice a bit husky. "Good thing we are going—the quicker the better." Then he turned to Hugh with taunting voice. "If you know so much about these wild men, why don't you go and make peace with them as you boasted?"

"It could be done," said Hugh, although he sensed that the man was egging him on to a dangerous undertaking.

"No, no," protested Anita anxiously. "Leave them alone. Only a few more days, and we'll be gone."

"No man can make peace with those head-hunting cannibals," declared Sperling.

"I can," said Hugh, because the girl stood there and this man was laughing at him. "I will go and see them."

The girl turned upon him sharply. "You hired out to help us, not to go and get yourself killed right when we need you most."

"Oh, don't worry," laughed Sperling, "he doesn't dare go."

"I have made friends with savages just as wild as the Mangaroma. Why live here in constant fear and danger, when a few trinkets would purchase immunity?"

Sperling's puffed watery eyes were like the cold lenses of a snake as he stared at the speaker.

"Go and buy yourself some, then!" he sneered, as he walked away.

"Don't," begged Anita. "Don't pay any attention to Barry. At times he isn't quite himself."

"I'm going to find out who shot at me," declared Hugh. "If it was one of the Mangaromas, I want to know it. If there is some one here who is trying to get me, I want to know who it is. Some one must sift this to the bottom before one of us is killed."

"Oh, Hugh!"

"You,"—a bit huskily,—"might be the next victim!"

NOT because he had made an idle boast, nor to impress this girl with his own prowess, but because he feared for her, Hugh determined to make some contact with these unseen wild men of the forest with the hope of establishing a truce for the short time they would be there. He was not afraid of the jungle. He had survived many touch-and-go experiences with wild tribes. He knew how to approach these wary savages who had good reason to fear all strangers.

On one of his upriver hunts, paddling slowly along a wide branch of the main stream, he had discovered a small *chacra*, or native clearing, where once had stood a large

native house, long since burned by Tono and his rubber-gatherers. Wild yams grew there, coarse plantains, edible palm fruits, survivals of native plantings. There was evidence that the Mangaromas still visited the place occasionally to harvest these crops. So, at the first opportunity, Hugh paddled up there in a small canoe. In a conspicuous place in this clearing he erected a framework of poles from which he hung a few things certain to attract any savage visitors, bright cloth, old tins, glass bottles, bits of iron. This, as he well knew, is the way of trade between warlike savages who do not dare meet face to face and yet have things to exchange.

WILOSON had been there several years, and unquestionably the Mangaromas, though never seen, knew about him. They knew, reasoned Hugh, that these white people were not dangerous if left alone in their clearing. This truce, Hugh thought, easily could be extended into a permanent peace and the Mangaromas made useful as hunters of wild meat, so desirable and difficult to obtain.

"In all the frontier countries of the world," Hugh told himself as he fixed up his trade goods, "peace has been established with the natives; why not here?"

The Mangaromas might be cannibals, head-hunters, but they certainly were no more savage and dangerous than the wild blacks of Australia, the head-hunters of Borneo, the black cannibals of Africa, all of whom ultimately made peace with their white neighbors.

Several times he paddled up there, only to find his initial peace offering undisturbed, as though the wild men feared it to be bait for some white man's trap. But one day the trade goods were gone, and in their stead Hugh found an earthen pot full of bright pebbles, a bundle of bone-tipped arrows, nuts wrapped in palm leaves, wild fruits, the wealth of wild men still in the stone age. For several days this exchange of goods went on until at last, in answer to his loud shouting as he approached the place, a timid voice answered from the jungle—in words that he could understand! This was even better luck than he hoped for and made the uncertain venture easier.

"Brothers of the forest," he called out in the dialect of the *Ti-pa-hui*, learned while living with that tribe on the Rio Puru, "my hands are empty. I am both brother and friend. Lay down your weapons and come out. Let there be peace and trade between us."

For a long time there was silence, and then the voice spoke again.

"Your words are thick and strange, White One, but we understand. No white man ever spoke to us before except in the voice of thunder."

"My words are your words. Your brothers of the south are my brothers. We speak the same. Come out in peace."

Hugh was happily surprised to discover that he could understand these natives, though he knew from past experiences that the root language of many of these Amazon tribes is the same. A long time, and much coaxing, was necessary before a withered old Mangaroma warrior stepped reluctantly out into the clearing as though, in all truth, he had been selected as a test victim because he had not long to live anyway, and was being forced out by spears.

"Brother," he quavered.

"Have no fear!" called Hamilton.

"But you are white!"

"Some white men are good. See, I bring presents. Behold my magic."

Hugh knew that other eyes were watching from hiding. With his handkerchief he began a few simple tricks of parlor magic, making it disappear and reappear at will. As the minutes passed and the old one remained unharmed, was actually visiting with the lone white man, three young

warriors stepped boldly out—short, thick-set, muscular brown men, Mongolian of feature, all but naked.

When Hugh got back, it was dark. Sperling came running down to the river-bank to meet his canoe. The man was so nervous and anxious that Hugh suspected he had been drinking.

"Lord love us," he cried, "where have you been? We've been looking all over for you."

"I have been visiting the Mangaromas," replied Hugh.

"The devil you have!"

"It may interest you to know that I have found out that they didn't shoot that poisoned arrow at me."

"They'd probably tell you!"

It was hopeless to try to make Barry believe that he had been visiting with the Mangaromas, so Hugh only laughed and went on. But the visit itself, fraught with danger as it was, nerved him up so he could not sleep. He lay there on the iron cot for a long time, wide-eyed, trying to reason out which one of the field-hands had a blowgun concealed, and where it was most likely to be hidden.

Unable to sleep, he got up and went outdoors, a rifle under his arm. Cool and softly moonlight, a night vibrant with familiar tropic noises, but no hint of danger. The big house was dark, but there was a light in Sperling's hut, and Hugh thought to go up there for the comfort of human companionship.

But when he neared the open window, he inadvertently witnessed a peculiar thing that made him change his mind hastily and walk quietly and sadly away. In the lighted room Sperling had just finished pounding something to dust in a small native stone mortar. Whatever this might be, Hugh was astounded to witness the man snuffing the powder up his nostrils through the hollow leg-bone of a deer!

"Poor Barry," he sighed.

He knew that the tropics had claimed another victim. He recognized this strange rite as a dangerous native habit of sniffing the powdered dry dust of *coca* leaves.

CHAPTER IX

TONO the Wild came down river in a small canoe propelled by two stalwart Peruvian paddlers. He professed to need provisions, stating that they had found it extremely difficult, on account of the hostility of the savages, to obtain the usual amount of wild food. He certainly did not look hungry, and was as big and boisterous as ever. His eyes were constantly upon the blonde girl.

"I have made camp far up the river road where there is a great forest of wild rubber," he boasted. "I make myself rich."

"If the price of rubber in Manaos drops, you will have all your work for nothing," warned Barry.

There were times when Sperling was all fire and life and activity, talkative, laughing and friendly, but this was not one of them. Now he was irritable, sullen, and his eyes were dull and heavy. His voice was high-pitched and argumentative. He disliked Tono as a matter of course.

"There is neither fortune nor future in wild rubber," added Wilson.

"My rubber trees cost me nothing," laughed Tono in the noisy way he had. "I do not even bother to tap them. I cut them down and bleed them on the ground to the last drop. The hot sun, let through the holes where the trees fall, coagulates my rubber. All I have to do is pick it up and pull the ropes out of the bleeding cuts to bind it into convenient balls. Always there are more trees, just beyond—enough to last forever."

"That is what men always have thought," corrected Wilson. "They said back home, only a few years ago, that

there were enough lumber trees to last forever; they know better now. A few more years of your kind of rubber-gathering, and all the wild trees will be gone."

"What do I care?" laughed Tono. "By that time I shall be rich and taking my ease in Manaos or Para."

"Luck to you," said Anita, "—though we won't be here to greet you."

"No?" in startled surprise.

"We will be gone by that time," explained Wilson.

He stared at them incredulously.

"Gone — when — where?"

"Home," said Anita. "Back to the States. You didn't think we were to stay here forever?"

"Why not?" he asked. "This is the most beautiful and the richest country in the world."

Spoken out of ignorance; Tono knew no other country, and could not read or write.

"Long before you come downstream again with your boats filled with rubber our work here will be completed," explained Wilson. "In a few days we shall dig up all these young hevea trees and pack them for shipment."

"And leave this, your plantation?" exclaimed Tono.

"This is but an experiment. We came here to breed and develop better rubber trees. Now our work is done, and we go."

"Ah," sighed Tono, "I begin to understand."

He went about where the trees were tapped and examined them critically. He knew rubber if he knew little else. Here were not so many trees, but row by row as he walked through the planting, he saw that the white, milky sap dripping into the latex cups was increasing by some subtle magic, until the last row, trees almost too young to bleed, flowed faster than any rubber trees he ever saw gashed before.

"It is true," he admitted. "Never such rubber trees in the world before!"

He saw, as in a clear vision of the future, his adventurous occupation gone, his own ruin. If those trees survived shipment, the day certainly was near when he no longer would lead his brave *coboclos* into the great forest of the Amazon to cut down and bleed the wild rubber trees.

"May the hot fires of hell burn that old sorcerer and his magic trees!" he cursed bitterly. "May the wild savages of the jungle take his head and destroy this place as they once reduced the *pasada* of—"

That was an idea!

Tono was as bold as he was brave, as arrogant as he was ignorant. Every time he visited the plantation he became a bit more presumptuous. When he saw Anita approaching through the trees, he was glad of this opportunity.

"I will come back downriver before you go," he said as if her ears were eager for his ardent words. "I have rubber enough. I am rich now."

"You certainly are a big man, Tono," she laughed.

"The biggest, bravest and best *cauchero* in the country," he boasted. "I am king of all rubber-hunters. No man dares stand before me. Even the wild *infieles* of the jungle fear me as they fear death."

"Tell the world, Tono!" translating a bit of slang.

"And all women like me," eying her closely.

"Oh, how could they help it!" — teasingly.

"And when I come back down," — stepping close, his big hands working eagerly, — "I shall take you with me to Manaos."

"Oh, we will be gone by that time, Tono. We won't need you then."

"With me," hoarsely, "your Tono!"

Slowly she began to comprehend, sensing the fervor of his words.

"Why—why, Tono!" she expostulated.

He stepped quickly forward, his arms outstretched, but she was quick to evade him.

"I can make you rich, in Manaos," he declared.

"You talk of impossibilities," she cried.

"Why? I am a man!"

"Not a man of my race," she tried to explain.

Sudden rage and burning hate swept through Tono, for he was a red man at heart.

"So, you think you are too good for me, eh?"

"No, it isn't that, Tono, only—"

He didn't give her a chance to explain.

"I always get what I want of life," he boasted.

"You're lucky, Tono."

"It isn't altogether luck. I take what I want of life."

"From helpless savages!"

"Here in the wilderness brave men make their own laws."

"Gun law! Observe that I wear a copy of that same law in my own belt."

Tono stepped back, choking on his own foolish words, grinning, arms folded, but he could not disguise or hide the savage looking out of his eyes.

"It is no harm to like you," he laughed.

"As a friend, no," she warned; "but you go too far."

"I will go far into the wilds—where such as I belong. I understand: you whites are all alike, men and women, all alike. It is Tono the brave and strong when you need me up and down this dangerous river—but 'damned native' back in town!"

"You know that isn't true, Tono. I have always been a friend. It is only that you ask too much of me. I cannot be more than a friend to you."

In that embarrassing moment she welcomed any diversion, any interruption, but was quite unprepared for a general alarm.



"You can't run away from me. You can't dodge me forever."

"*Infields!*" roared Tono in his great bull voice. "The Mangaromas!"

He was staring over her shoulder, and Anita whirled around to see approaching from the river a reddish-brown youth, his middle wrapped in a spotted-cat skin; but there seemed to be no reason for Tono's shouting, for Hamilton was walking beside the strange Indian in all friendliness.

"It is all right, Tono," assured the girl, twice glad to see Hugh at that moment, even in the company of a wild man. "It is all right."

But Tono's first loud roar of alarm brought Sperling on the run and sent the frightened field-hands in a mad race for the safety of the buildings. At this demonstration of fear and hostility the youthful savage halted, ready to run for his life, but Hugh reassured him.

"Have no fear," said Hugh. "My magic is all-powerful. I stand between you and this black man. No harm will come to you, as I promised."

"I am not afraid!"

As the roaring Tono, welcoming some one on whom to expend his rage, tore the heavy machete from his belt and leaped toward them, Hugh stopped him with uplifted hand. "Wait!" said he.

"I kill every *infield* I see," snarled Tono.

"Not this one," warned Hugh. "Stop!"

The Mangaroma youth understood the menace of Tono's voice and action if not the words. He leaped back, crouching on his toes like a sprinter, ready to race for the protection of the forest.

"I slay these *Indios* at sight," bellowed Tono, "wherever I find them!"

"Stand where you are," cautioned Hugh, "or I will shoot you dead in your tracks."

Tono, beside himself with wrath, suffering from the recent sting of defeat, with the woman who had denied him standing there to witness, was in a dangerous mood. It flashed through his mind that here before his very eyes might be the man who had destroyed both hope and happiness. Now was the time to dispose of this possible rival. The Indian offered an excuse. He began to shout for his men in a loud voice, but instantly the girl was between him and his objective, pushing him back.

"Tono," she exclaimed. "Tono!"

"Out of my way—"

"Back to your boat! You will do no killing here."

Tono's red lips drew back in snarling rage; he turned upon her threateningly, the machete in his fist—and looked straight into the blue barrel of the rifle in the steady hands of the *Americano*.

"Easy now," warned Hugh in Inca, "or the devil will have unexpected company for dinner!"

Growling like a wounded bear, Tono slunk away toward the river, intercepting his men, and his long canoe was soon racing back upstream.

"My day will come," he muttered, over and over again.

S PERLING came panting to the scene, disappointed that he could have no part in this crisis.

"What do you mean by bringing that barbarian here?" he demanded with a show of anger.

"Just to prove that peace can be made with our wild neighbors, the Mangaromas," Hugh explained. "This is Ai-tlo-cho, the son of a chief, and I have given him assurance of peace and protection."

"Peace with those damned head-hunters!"

"Certainly—why not?"

Hugh turned to the Mangaroma youth and began to speak in a language the others could not understand, while Anita wondered where he had learned the guttural words.

"Pay no attention to this white man. He is sick. He

has fear. I will not permit him to harm you. This white girl would be your friend. She is the granddaughter of the white wizard who is always working among the trees."

But Sperling was, as ever, antagonistic. "You can't tame these wild savages—can't trust them for a minute," he argued. "It is a mistake to bring one of them here. We have been years putting the fear of death into their black hearts with a rifle, and now you bring one of them here to see just how weak and helpless we are."

"You sing a different tune now," laughed Hugh. "The other day you were daring me to visit them."

"I never dreamed you'd be such a fool!"

Hugh acted as interpreter, so Anita could talk to the youth.

"The white goddess wants to know why your people shoot at us with their blowguns," he said.

"Tell her that our hunters never have shot at any of you," replied Ai-tlo-cho.

"She asks who did shoot at us?"

"Tell this Sun Girl that once in a great while the Ji-ve-dis from far upstream raid this way for our heads. It may be that they shot at you from the forest."

IT was like a visit to fairyland for this savage youth of the Stone Age to behold the wonders Hugh showed him. It was almost beyond belief, and worth all the risk he had taken, to see such things. Sticks that struck fire, lights that came and went at command, words that came out of a box, all this, and much more, equally bewildering. When he went away, his canoe was heavy with presents for his people.

"Where did you learn the language of the Mangaromas?" asked Anita as Ai-tlo-cho paddled away.

"I lived with the Ti-pa-hui, on the Rio Puru, for several months," explained Hugh briefly. "They are of the same root-stock, and their language is much the same."

This man's almost unbelievable stories of the wilderness seemed to have no end, but this one, certainly, could not be denied. He could talk with this savage youth.

"I'll never get to know you," she sighed.

"You will," he promised.

"I wonder."

That night, seated on the edge of his iron cot preparing for bed, Hugh remembered her words with pleasure, wondering if she really wanted to know him better. A small oil lamp lighted the tiny room and through the open window cast a widening fan of orange brightness over the shadowy earth. A multitude of tree frogs were singing in the young heveas. Somewhere near by a prowling jaguar roared nocturnal challenge. As Hugh bent to take off his shoes, something whizzed past the back of his neck so close he could feel the air disturbed by its passage, and struck with an audible ping against the opposite wall. Curious as to what this strange insect might be, he turned his head to look—

In one leap he was on his feet and had blown out the lamp. Then he dropped to the floor and began to grope for his rifle, expecting every second to hear the rattle of gunfire announcing a general attack. He heard nothing. Even the noisy tree-frogs were suddenly silent. Though it was intensely dark in the room, he still could see, in his mind's eye, plain as day, a little splinter of bamboo, tipped with death, sticking there in the wall!

"That was close."

Softly, yet quickly, like a big cat stalking game, he was outdoors, searching the darkness, finding nothing.

"I supposed that all these savages were afraid of the dark," he argued with the facts. "They fear the witches and demons and black magic of the night—and yet one just shot at me with a blowgun!"

A twig cracked out among the rubber trees; the roosting parrots squawked. It might have been the jaguar, but—"There must be strange wild men prowling about here," he told himself. But though he watched until daylight he saw nothing of any enemy.

CHAPTER X

"ONLY the moon-eyed jaguars can see to walk in the dark forest at night."

"A man was hunting last night."

"Then it must have been a white man. They do not fear the dark. Our warriors never go beyond the light of the fires after sun leaves us, because of the night-hunting jaguars and giant serpents, large enough to swallow a man whole, that come up out of the river after dark. When the sun is gone, the evil demons of darkness are busy with their sorcery. If they catch a man in the dark, they change him into a tapir, or a bat, and our magic is not strong enough to bring him back again."

A small clearing in a sea of green. A long steep-roofed palm-thatched house where less than two score primitive Mangaromas lived. They stared at this strange white man incredulously, evidencing a bit of fear—half-naked men and women and timid brown children—for this was Hugh's first visit to their village.

"Some one shot at me last night with a blowgun," he explained.

"It must have been a demon, some vindictive spirit of the dark."

"The arrow,"—Hugh smiled,—"was very real."

"There is peace with us," said the chief. "Who would dare kill a blood-brother?"

"Surely not one of the Mangaromas," added the son. "Our house is closed at night against the beasts of the forest, against man enemies and the demons of the dark. We were all inside this house until sun came back."

"Some one certainly shot at me."

"Then you have white man enemies. They alone do not fear the dark."

"The only white men, as you know, within many days' journey are ourselves."

"You have slaves."

"They do not know how to make a blowgun."

"Let us see this arrow. It may be the work of our enemies. If they are near, we should know it."

They all crowded about examining the tiny dart.

"It is as I said," the old chief explained. "This arrow is of strange wood, and very heavy and the bit of cotton is not our wild cotton. The poison on the tip is not blackish like the poison our witch-doctors make."

"I did not think it was you," explained Hugh. "Probably the Ji-ve-dis are hiding in the forest. Send forth several of your best hunters and trackers to search the jungle."

"It shall be done," said the old chief. "Your enemies are now our enemies."

As Hugh paddled homeward he remembered that not all savages are afraid of the dark. It was entirely possible that these raiding Ji-ve-dis from the far north were different. They might have come down, thinking to gather a few Mangaroma heads, and they certainly would take a shot at an unsuspecting white man if they happened to see one through an open window.

"Where the devil have you been?" began Sperling when he got back. "We thought you must have been dragged off by your savage friends in the dark."

"Breakfasted with them," laughed Hugh.

"You'll get a poisoned arrow in your ribs some day, and then you will know more about these cannibals."

"Not necessary to go to the woods for that," grinned Hugh. "A nice little poisoned arrow buzzed in my window last night and missed by an inch or so."

"The devil you say!"

"Here is the very dart."

"Well, it is no more than you could expect, after bringing one of the treacherous devils right into camp."

"The funny part of it is, the Mangaromas didn't shoot at me."

"Ah-hah! So you know who did, eh?"

"No, I don't know," admitted Hugh. "But I mean to find out."

"There are plenty of other red devils around here who would welcome a chance to shoot at us in the dark."

"You're right about that," agreed Hugh. "We won't be here but a few days longer, anyway, and I'll be looking for that fellow."

It was true, as Sperling said, that no one could know all the wild *Indios* of the Amazon. It was well within reason that some of those savage raiders from the unknown interior might not be afraid of the dark. It was possible that one of the field-hands, bolder than the rest, had a blowgun hidden out and knew how to use it. There was also the enraged Tono to remember.

Hugh did not say anything to Anita about the incident, more than to say that he did not trust the help, and to ask for permission for a long midday siesta so he could stand guard nights.

"I don't sleep very well, anyway," he explained. "I think some one ought to patrol the grounds nights. If there's danger, we oughtn't to take unnecessary chances."

"Why don't you sleep?" she asked. "Are you afraid?"

"The horrors I went through recently come back in dreams. Several times I've dreamed of a snake, long as a house, thick as a barrel, and it was after me."

"It's just a case of nerves," said she. "You oughtn't to let such impossible dreams annoy you."

"The funny part of it is," said he, "that the incident actually happened to me in real life."

"Oh. . . . Well—we won't be here much longer anyway and if you want to watch nights it is all right."

THE next dawn as the approaching sun reddened the eastern sky Hugh was standing on the river-bank when Ai-tlo-cho came down in his canoe to report that their hunters, expert bushmen, had been unable to find any trace of enemies.

"If the Ji-ve-dis are here, then they must have come by water," he explained. "Surely if they walked any of the forest trails, we would have found the marks of their feet."

"It is possible that they may be hidden in their canoes somewhere along the river," suggested Hugh.

"An old trick of those Monkey-faced Ones is to sink their canoes in the river with stones and lie hidden in the thickets awaiting a favorable opportunity to strike us."

"Do they ever attack your villages at night?" asked Hugh.

"No. They do not dare do that. They too fear the demons of darkness."

This information was all the more puzzling. If a war-party had come by water, they would leave no trail. If the Ji-ve-dis did not hunt men at night, then some one else certainly did. . . .

That morning Wilson announced that his work was done. They would begin digging the trees immediately to pack them for shipment. In addition to the nursery stock, scions and cuttings would be taken. This packing necessitated considerable skill and supervision to keep the young trees and grafts alive until they could be replanted or reset in Florida.

HARDLY an hour after this announcement, a black boy came dashing in from the upper field, ashen with terror, shrieking at the top of his voice.

"*Indios!*" he screamed. "*Indios!*"

"Where?" demanded Hugh. "Where?"

"They have shot the old one!"

Down from the big house ran Anita, hastily buckling on a heavy cartridge-belt, a repeating rifle under her arm. Sperling came panting up.

"Where is Gramp?" cried Anita. "Where is he?"

The native boy, now that he had company and felt safe, became instantly too hysterical to talk coherently.

"*Indios!*" was all they could get out of him.

"I thought so!" Sperling glared at Hugh. "Your red friends returning your social call."

The alarm-gun was fired. The laborers came running in to the safety of the buildings, where Hugh was directing the defense.

"Gramp does not come!" cried Anita. "Where is he?"

"Wait," cautioned Hugh. "He will come."

"No, no! Something has happened to him."

"I think this is just another false alarm," said Hugh, seeing no evidence of attacking savages. "These fellows are always seeing *Indios* if you leave them alone a minute. If this were a general attack, we would be in the thick of it by now."

"But Gramp—out there alone!"

"I'll go and find him," volunteered Hugh.

"Careful, man," warned Sperling.

"I'll go with you," cried Anita. "We must find Gramp." Sperling would not permit Hugh to play this hero rôle alone.

"We will all go," said he. "Three rifles may be necessary. If the beggars charge us, we can fall back here."

THEY went slowly forward, but there was no sign of savages, no evidence of any raid. The entire clearing was devoid of all human life.

"Probably they lay along the edge of the jungle watching us," suggested Sperling. "They don't dare face repeating rifles."

"No," said Hugh. "There are no savages there now."

"How do you know there aren't?"

They reached the highest point of land and were able to look out over the nursery, but there was no sign of Wilson.

"Gramp!" called the girl anxiously. "Oh, Gramp!"

They thought he might be hiding among the young trees where he had been working, but when no answer came, they ran forward in alarm, calling, searching. . . .

Sperling found him, a limp and huddled heap between the rows of his beloved trees.

"Gramp!" a gasping cry from Anita.

She dropped her rifle and ran to him, calling, shaking him, as though she hoped thus to arouse him from this last long sleep.

Hugh, choking back his own grief, could see that death had come quickly. He thought of the climate and the hot sun, overwork and a weak heart—then his wet eyes saw a little splinter of bamboo buried deep into the flesh at the base of the jaw, a bit of white cotton dangling.

"The savages," from Sperling in husky voice, hardly more than a whisper. "Get back away from here."

"We are well out of blowgun range," said Hugh.

"I suppose you know all about blowguns!"

"I have hunted with them," said Hugh. "No blowgun I ever saw could shoot from the forest to this spot."

Sperling stared hard at him, his eyes very bright.

"So you have hunted with blowguns, eh? Where were you when Max was shot?"

"Hugh!" Anita turned upon him anxiously. "Oh, Hugh!"

"Several of the men can testify that I was with them in the supply-house when the alarm came."

CHAPTER XI

MAX WILSON was gone, but not until his great work with the wild hevea had been completed.

His sudden death unnerved them all. Anita was stricken down three days with a fever as a result of her grief. All the work, for a few days, fell upon Hugh. Sperling resorted to his hollow bone and the pulverized coca leaves. When he got on his feet again, he was more nervous and shaky than ever. He seemed to have lost all interest in the work and wandered off by himself doing nothing.

One morning he came running in from the field, firing his rifle wildly, a poisoned dart sticking from his clothing, crying out that he had been attacked by Indians. He was too frightened, or too nervous, to talk coherently, and his story was so jumbled and obscure Hugh would have believed it nothing more than a hallucination born of dope, except for the evidence of the arrow. After that Sperling kept indoors.

Anita soon was the center of a whirlwind of activity. She needed activity of mind and body to forget. With Sperling useless, she took full charge of the preparations to leave. Hugh helped her all he could. The little trees were dug and packed. The boats were overhauled and made ready for the downriver journey. The few personal things about the house were boxed.

Sperling moped around and did nothing. Hugh tried to arouse the man to action.

"Get this duffel into your war-bags," he urged.

"All right, old man, I will—never fear—plenty of time yet."

The man was logy, stupid, sodden. His clothing was wrinkled and awry from being slept in.

"You've got to brace up," commanded Hugh.

"Righto."

"You don't want to stay here alone, do you?"

"Good God, no! I couldn't stand that!"

"Then get your things packed—pull yourself together, man, or you won't be able to go."

Barry made a desperate effort and roused himself. A shave, a cold bath, fresh clothing, and he looked almost his old self again. The next day he was back with the men.

At Hugh's suggestion all the tools, and such supplies as were not required for the downriver trip, were to be given to the Mangaromas as a reward for their work in searching for the hidden raiders. It seemed certain that they would be allowed to embark unmolested. And then—

Hugh was in the latex room when suddenly he became conscious that he was not alone. Instantly he whirled about, to face a barefooted and half-naked Brazilian.

"What do you want?" Hugh demanded angrily.

The man drew back guiltily. His gray lips lifted over gleaming teeth, in a broad smile.

"Latex cups," he muttered.

In his big brown hand was the tomahawk-like instrument used to gash the rubber trees.

"You know that we bleed no more trees here," answered Hugh.

"No one told me!"—sullenly.

"I am telling you now—get out!"

The brown figure shambled out. A few minutes later a big black came slouching boldly into the room, grinning, his thick fingers working convulsively.

"Now what?" demanded Hugh.

He stood facing the man, a measure of acid in his right hand, about to coagulate the last trough of rubber.

"Buckets."

Something in the black's rumbling voice, in his rolling eyes, in his very attitude of crouching strength, like a tiger gathering for a charge, warned Hugh in time to take a step backwards. As the black lunged forward, Hugh dashed the acid mixture into his snarling face and leaped aside. Roaring pain, the black lashed out furiously to close with the white man.

He was between Hugh and the rifle. To remain within that little room with the madman was death itself. Hugh dashed outside just in time to see the field-hands pushing off the canoes.

"Stop!" he shouted. "Leave those boats alone!"

Surprised to see him running out of the building alive, the men stood a moment, staring at him, as though looking at a ghost; then three of them, familiar with firearms, snatched up hidden rifles. The fact that they did not have the rifles in their hands at the time gave Hugh a chance to dodge behind the latex house before they could fire, and with this between them as a shield, he legged it for the big house.

"Barry!" he called loudly. "Anita!"

Single-handed, unarmed, he could do nothing to stop this mutiny and desertion; but if he could find Barry and Anita, who had rifles, the boats would not dare push out into the open stream. "Barry—Anita—quick!" he shouted. "The men are deserting!"

BECAUSE I love you, Anita."

Sperling's voice trembled with emotion. He stepped eagerly forward, arms outstretched, as though these words explained and excused anything a man might do.

"Because I love you, girl."

"Barry!" Surprise and anger mingled in her anxious voice. "Oh, Barry, you could have waited!"

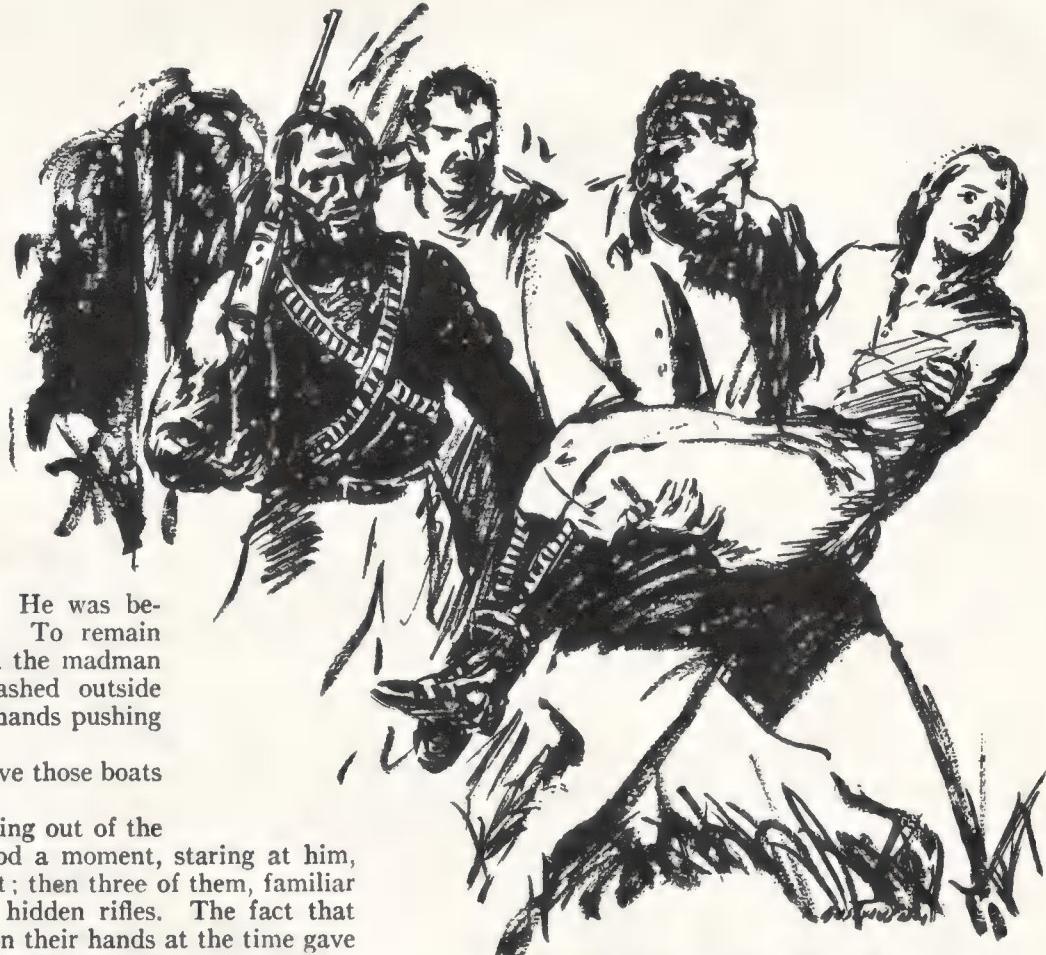
"I could not."

Not yet did she realize, or even suspect, that his hasty summons to the empty tool-house, at the far end of the clearing, had an ulterior purpose. But she noted with alarm that he was careful to keep between her and the open doorway. She was unarmed, and they were alone. Of necessity she must try to reason with him, knowing that the man was not himself, thinking that emotion had got the better of his judgment.

"Barry, if you care for me at all, as a friend," she began anxiously, "let me go now. There is so much work to be done. We are leaving early tomorrow morning."

"No! You and I are not leaving," he declared hoarsely. "Not tomorrow, or any other morning. We stay here, together—forever."

He stood as though about to spring upon her. His long fingers trembled; his eyes were strangely bright with some inner fire; there was a fixed grimace upon his thin lips meant to be a smile.



He picked up the helpless girl and led the way back to the waiting canoes.

"Barry, this is not the time nor the place to be sentimental," she protested.

"It is the hour—my hour. The time—"

"Did you call me down here purposely to see you make a fool of yourself?" she countered angrily.

"To save you, if you want to know," he cried hoarsely. "I offer you love—but for me, you would have worse."

"What do you mean?" she demanded.

"You can have your choice," he leered. "It isn't too late yet—a white man's love, or those black-and-tan—"

"Barry! What in the world are you trying to say?"

"I am telling you that the men have mutinied."

His forced laughter, the fact that he knew of this mutiny and had done nothing to stop it, hinted that he might have had a hand in it. At best he must have made a coward's bargain to save his own skin.

"Barry, quick!" she cried, trying to force her way past him to the door. "We must stop them!"

"Can't stop them!"—heading her off again. "Don't want to stop them—get myself killed if I tried it. Then where would you be? Let the beggars go, if they'll leave us alone."

"They will leave us here!"

"Alone," he interrupted with a laugh in which there was little mirth. "Just you and Barry, alone."

What he said about the men must be true, else he would not have dared such a thing, she reflected.

"We are not alone!" she exclaimed angrily. "There is Hugh. He knows that I am here." She stretched the truth a bit. "He will be here any minute."

"Oh, he will, will he! By this time that damned conceited Yankee is making his last grand tour through hell, where he belongs. He is out of my way at last!"

"Barry! Get hold of yourself, Barry!" she pleaded. "I have been crazy about you ever since I first saw you. I have always been ready to do anything to get you, and now I have done it, done everything—for you."

He swept her off her feet and into his long arms, holding her struggling body close.

"If—I—had—a—gun—" she panted.

"You would shoot me, eh?" he laughed.

"Yes, I would—just as I would kill a mad dog."

"Devil a doubt of it," he chuckled. "But you haven't any gun."

Her ears were straining for the slightest sound of anyone moving outside. She could not believe that Hugh was dead; and if he was alive he would not desert her.

"Let me go," she demanded, "before some one comes."

"Oh, long before that!" he grinned. "I'll let you go long before anyone comes, no fear. Because there isn't anyone coming, my dear, not today, nor tomorrow, nor in a month of Sundays."

With this came desperate fear, knowing that she was in the grip of a maniac.

"Where is Hugh?" she demanded.

"No one knows who he is, nor where he came from—and no one cares where he has gone."

Her slender body slumped as from a sudden blow, her knees gave way and she sank half fainting toward the floor. She could not hope to fight this man, but she might outwit him.

"Anita," he cried in alarm. "Anita—love!"

BARRY'S emotions were like his thoughts, half-finished, a crazy jumble. Her sudden collapse frightened him, startled him, and at first he thought that she was dead.

"Anita—dear girl—speak to me. Speak to Barry, girl. I did it all for the best—we'll be happy here, alone, just the two of us—make a home and a fortune here."

Her limp body was slipping through his arms, so that he had to shift his hands to support her. In that instant she twisted out of his arms, recovering strength and agility so quickly that his bewildered and half-crazed mind did not realize what she was doing until too late. Ducking under his sweeping arms, quick as a flash, she leaped for the door and was away.

"You little devil, you!"

Screaming with rage, Sperling was after her. Though she ran for her very life, her eyes searching the clearing for some sign of Hugh, she saw no one, not even one of the field-hands. She soon realized that there was no out-distancing her long-legged pursuer.

"You can't get away," shrieked Sperling behind her. "You can't get away."

She could hear his heavy breathing, the *swish-swish* of his clothing, the *thud-thud-thud* of his big feet, and knew that he was rapidly overtaking her. Down through the nursery she raced, directly toward the river. If she could gain the water—Barry could not swim—there were no boats—she would rather drown.

"You can't get away from me—you can't get away!"

She ducked aside in time to escape his sweeping hands and clutching fingers, dodged again and ran back toward the jungle wall. But her strength was exhausted; she knew that she could run but a few yards more.

"I've got you now—"

A booming rifle-shot, a hoarse cry from the forest edge, a yelping chorus of savage voices. The running girl heard a heavy body strike the earth close behind her, a grunt, a gasp, a mortal scream of terror. Then—

The green jungle opened before her like a magic door and out of the shadow leaped the powerful figure of Tono the Wild.

TONO! Oh, Tono!"

As one in terror welcoming the comforting strong arms of a friend the frightened girl ran towards the giant.

"Antonio is here at last!"

Tono laughed loud with unconcealed delight as he tossed aside his rifle and gathered her in his big arms, sweeping her from the ground, snuggling her to his broad hairy barrel of a chest.

"I knew you would come to my arms!"

She could hear rifles roaring down by the river, and savage voices shouting.

"Tono," she cried. "Help—quick—the workmen have mutinied. Let me down, instantly."

"Fear not," laughed Tono, holding her all the tighter. "Those are Tono's rifles speaking."

"Let me down!" as a new terror seized her.

Tono the barbarian knew but one way with women, and that was the way of the wild. "Never out of these arms!" he declared.

"Hugh—Barry—Hugh!" she called loudly. "They will kill you for this, Tono!"

"Tono has no fear of dead men," he laughed. "I dropped that English dog at your heels. The music of my rifles by the river is a death-march for that accursed *Americano*."

This news was terrifying, but it was not like her to give up without a struggle, and she fought with all the strength she had.

"Devil-cat!" cried Tono, wiping blood from his face. "I know how to tame you!"

At the other end of the clearing, Hugh was running toward them, calling loudly for Anita and Barry. He was answered almost immediately by a rifle-shot, not from the river side behind him where the laborers were pushing off in the loaded canoes, but from the jungle beyond.

"Barry!"—thinking Sperling had fired at one of the mutineers,—"Anita!"

A glance behind as he topped a low knoll added to his bewilderment. He saw the men launching the canoes in frantic haste, instead of pursuing him, as he expected.

He ran through the standing rubber trees, up a slope, and then looked down towards the forest beyond the nursery, to see Anita in the mighty arms of Tono.

"Anita!" he shouted. "Tono!"

NOT yet, in the excitement, had he correlated all the facts. He saw nothing of Sperling. He thought Anita had run to Tono for help, and that the rubber-hunter had happened to arrive at a most opportune time. He ran directly toward them, not realizing that the girl was helpless in the arms of the giant, until Tono shouted a hoarse order to his men, and Anita, seeing him, cried out.

"Back, Hugh," she warned. "Back, for your life!"

As he halted in bewilderment, rifles began cracking, and lead whined around him. A miracle that he was not struck down, as invisible strong fingers were plucking at his clothes. Tono's men had been running toward the river, a long rifle-shot away, but now they turned back, shooting as they came. Conscious that he could do nothing there, that safety lay only in instant flight, he turned and ran diagonally back, zigzagging.

"Barry," he shouted, running through the standing rubber trees. "Barry!"

No answer but the rattling rifle-shots behind him. Tono's men ran down the river-bank to head him off from the boats. The field-hands saw them coming and pushed off in all haste, bending to the paddles, hurrying to get beyond rifle-range. Bullets spattered the paddlers with water. A man or two was hit, but flashing brown arms soon drove the boats beyond effective range. The raiders then gave their whole attention to Hugh.

There was but one hope of escape and that was the jungle. Near the edge of the forest he stumbled and fell, escaping a volley of rifle-bullets. Behind a little hillock of land he rolled and crawled toward the tangled green haven and wormed in out of sight like a big snake. Headless of thorns, smarting weeds, disturbed ants that bit like fire, he worked his way deep into the tangled vegetation.

"Those accursed *Americanos* are hard to kill," an excited Peruvian reported to Tono. "We filled that one as full of holes as an old coat, and still he crawled away into the jungle to die like a wounded jaguar."

"Go and finish him," ordered Tono.

"No man goes into the jungle to finish a wounded jaguar. Let him die there in his own time."

Tono knew that he could not drive his men in there; nor would anything tempt him into such a tangled mass of plant life, where a wounded tiger, or a wounded man, might lie in wait.

"Let him perish there at his leisure," agreed Tono. "Even if he crawls back out after we are gone, he will starve to death here. We will leave nothing behind. Destroy everything. Burn every building. Cut down every tree. Leave nothing here but desolation."

Loudly Tono called for ropes and one of his men to help tie his prisoner. They held her, bound her hands and arms and feet and legs with liana ropes, until she was helpless.

Under Tono's masterful direction the plantation was utterly destroyed. Into the flames went all the precious rubber trees and the cuttings packed for shipment. And in order to end the menace to wild rubber gathering, every one of the standing trees was cut down.

When their evil work was done to Tono's satisfaction, he picked up the helpless girl in his big arms and led the way back to the waiting canoes concealed behind a bend a short distance upstream. Loading their loot into the boats they pushed off and headed back into the wilderness.

"Wait until the Americans hear of this, Tono," said the girl, from the bottom of the canoe.

"They never will know anything about it," said Tono, "and if they do, all these men will swear that you went with me willingly."

CHAPTER XII

ESCAPING the flying lead by good luck, Hugh wormed his way into hiding as a shower of bullets slashed the green above his writhing body.

But Anita was now in Tono's hands, and Hugh could not remain in hiding there. He crawled to the edge of the clearing and peered cautiously out. The first thing he saw was Tono and one of his men tying Anita. Every building was burning furiously. There was no sign of Sperling.

Rage almost uncontrollable seized Hugh. But to charge was to die—to die was to be of no assistance to Anita. While he lived there was a chance, if only the slightest chance. He dropped face down upon the ground and lay cursing his helplessness. When he looked out again, Tono and his men were gone.

He came out of hiding cautiously, as a hunted animal leaves the cover. But the raiders had gone. The familiar buildings all were smoking ruins. The rubber trees were fast wilting and dying in the hot sun where they had been cut down. He ran down to the river, only to find that all the boats had been taken and the boat-house burned. A few bits of paper, an empty bag or two, all that was left of the stores.

Tono and his raiders had taken Anita with them. But

they certainly would not carry Sperling along as a prisoner of war. If he could find Sperling, and perhaps get a gun, pursuit of Tono was possible. Hugh was running along the edge of the jungle calling Sperling by name, when he all but stumbled over the Englishman's body.

"Barry!"

A glance assured him that the man was dead. A soft-nosed bullet had torn its way through his chest.

Had he been running to Tono for help when they shot him?

There was no rifle near the body, but this was to be expected, as Tono's men would be sure to take such a weapon. Turning the stiffening body over, Hugh saw the unmistakable bulge of a heavy revolver under the jacket beneath the left arm. Fingers trembling with excitement, Hugh tore open the man's coat and dragged out the weapon. At sight of it he broke out in hysterical laughter.

It was an air-pistol!

An air-gun, one of those modern well-made air-pistols, accurate, but only intended as a target weapon. Hugh was about to throw the useless thing into the brush, when it suddenly struck him that it was peculiar, to say the least, that a grown man should carry a toy gun concealed under his coat. He examined the weapon more closely, and his eyes happened to look into the barrel. He was surprised to see therein a tiny sharp splinter of bamboo. The air-pistol was loaded with a blowgun dart!

A deadly weapon if ever there was one, silent, mysterious, dangerous as the strike of a snake, even more effective than a bullet, for the merest prick from that deadly needle point would mean death. For a minute he stood there staring at the thing in his hand; then it came to him slowly, like a horrible vision unfolding within his brain, that he was holding in his hand the solution of all those mysterious blowgun darts.

"Good Lord!" he gasped in astonishment. "Sperling—killed Max Wilson with this damned thing. . . . And he tried twice to kill me with it!"

Death that would be almost instantly effective, and yet most easily and innocently explained, all the evidence pointing to the wild savages of the forest. A blowgun dart, deadly as any rifle bullet, and so easily accounted for in a country of wild men who use the blowgun so effectively.

With this solution in his hand, like the key to a difficult problem, Hugh saw it all now, the entire plot unfolding in his mind. Sperling had plotted to kill Wilson and also to kill him. Then Anita would be in his power, and he could take over the plantation and make himself rich with the new rubber trees. Barry Sperling, crazed with a dangerous native drug, had done this; and now he had paid for it with his life. Barry had tried, unsuccessfully, to kill him with latex—had put mud in his rifle-barrel hoping that the explosion would result in death, providing a fatal "accident"—and there had been other accidents. All this was a crazy man's work; and it probably included, as a fitting climax, the carefully planned mutiny of the field-hands, who were instructed to slay him before they took to the boats. He understood now why Anita had been running from Barry.

In Sperling's inner pocket Hugh found a roll of oiled silk in which was wrapped a dozen similar poisoned darts, each weighted to hold it on its course under the powerful impulse of the air-pistol. But this was the only weapon Hugh was able to find. Every building had been looted and burned. There was not a gun, an ax, a machete, a knife to be found even in the ashes.

TONO had a good start. Yet he did not hurry. There was no need of undue haste. Up the Rio Jaupery, in the wild rubber forests, Tono was the law. An armed

force of considerable size would be necessary to overtake him and despoil him of this long-anticipated hour. Such an expedition, on that frontier, as Tono well knew, was not even to be considered.

There were no white men nearer than Manaos. And they were powerless. In time, of course, these Americans would be missed. Questions would be asked of the river men and the rubber-hunters. Some one would find the burned buildings and the ruined plantation. And then the Mangaromas would get credit for a successful raid — or else the outrage would be laid to the runaway field-hands.

On the false bottom of his canoe, above the leakage and wash, lay the white woman who had denied him. She would be tame enough in a week. If she wasn't —

The hardwood paddles beat a steady rhythm on the worn gunwales of the canoes to each powerful stroke of the muscular brown arms.

"Untie me, Tono," Anita pleaded. "These cords hurt."

"Hei!" laughed Tono, knowingly. "I did that once, years ago, up the Rio Branco, and one of the finest brown girls I ever caught jumped into the river and deliberately drowned herself."

Anita said nothing, but her eyes burned a bit brighter, as the man had read her very thought. Mind was stronger than muscle, intellect was greater than brawn, she told herself, and surely there must be a way.

"I have always liked you, Tono. Permit me to sit beside you, Tono, as a woman should sit beside her man."

"Some other time," laughed Tono. "Your hands are small and beautiful and white, but I do not trust them!"

"How could I hurt a great big handsome giant like you, Tono, with these poor little hands?"

"I don't know," said he, "but you whites think of everything. I have noticed that the smallest finger on the trigger of a gun is just as efficient as the largest. And a knife in the small hand of a woman will find the life of the strongest man." . . .

Without a boat Hugh Hamilton, though alive and un-hurt, was even more helpless than without firearms. The only river craft in that locality were the canoes of the Mangaromas—and without hesitation he plunged into the forest to fight his way along the river-bank to the nearest Mangaroma village.

A broad tapir trail led to an old Indian path. As Hugh ran down this trail, it grew ever wider as it was joined by many smaller paths, and the human tracks grew fresher, until suddenly he burst out into another clearing, where his sudden and unexpected presence threw a small Mangaroma settlement into confusion and alarm. But his loud shouting that he came in peace fortunately brought Ai-tlo-cho to identify and to protect him. As soon as peace and

quiet were established Hugh explained why he had come in such haste, and demanded boats and guides and paddlers for instant pursuit of Tono.

"White One, we cannot help you," Ai-tlo-cho explained. "We have nothing but our spears and bows and arrows, and those men you would fight are all armed with the thunder and the lightning."

"Then I will follow them alone and empty-handed. Give me a canoe and I will go alone. I will travel day and night until I catch up with them."

"You will catch up with death at the same time."

"No matter. Give me a canoe."

"Before dark they will be far upstream," said the youth. "It is well known to us that when going up this river those rubber-hunters always spend the night at the abandoned village of our people, above the second rapids, which they destroyed in the long ago."

"How far is it to those rapids?" Hugh asked.

"One man could not get there at all," explained the old chief. "He could not get his canoe over the first

rapids, where it must be hauled over the rocks with ropes."

This was undoubtedly true enough, for all the native canoes are heavy, being crudely fashioned from hardwood logs. Hugh groaned aloud.

"Is there no way," he asked, "no forest path by land over which I can run to this abandoned village?"

Tono reared suddenly and whirled about.

"You!" he cried in superstitious terror.

"There is a man path of our people. The river above here takes a long bend, and plunges down two white-water rapids, over which they must haul their boats. This will delay their going. It is certain that they will spend the night at the old clearing. They always do. It may be that if you run well, and do not fear the demons of the dark, that you might find them at this camping-out place."

Just what he meant to do if he did manage to intercept Tono and his raiders at the old Indian clearing Hugh did not know and could not imagine. He knew only that he was going to keep as near Anita as possible. He knew if she did not escape she certainly would kill herself.

"We are too few to help you," explained the chief. "If we were strong in numbers, we could not fight those killers with our spears and arrows."

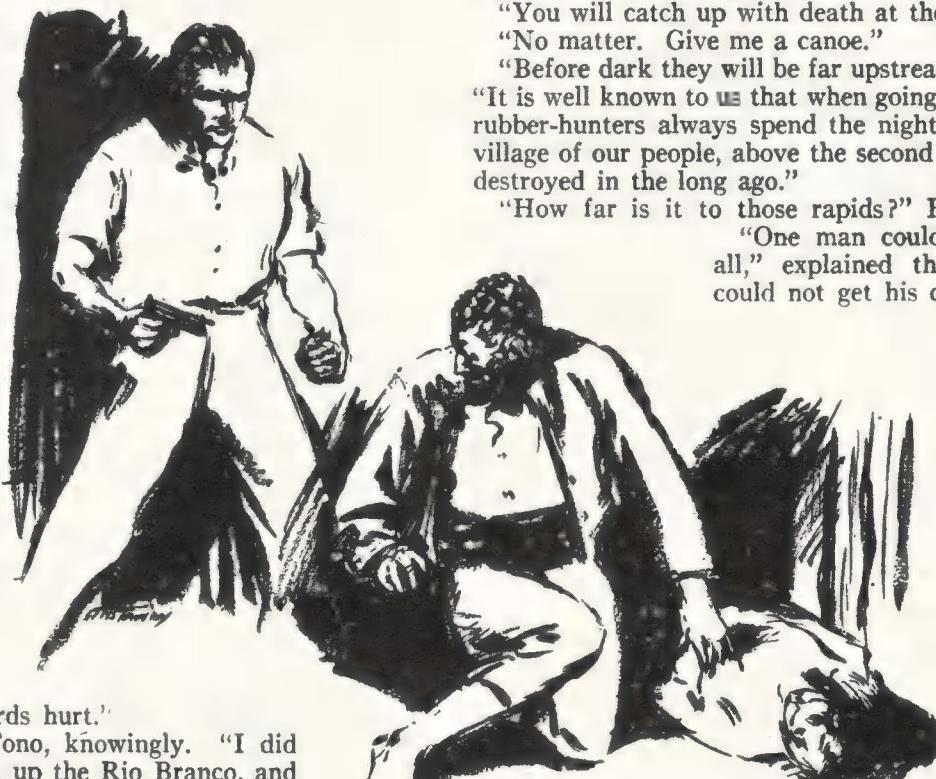
"Some one come with me to show the way," said Hugh.

"In a little while sun will be gone, and then the demons of the dark will be out."

Hugh knew that a guide was necessary. A lost trail, an unnecessary delay, might easily defeat his purpose. He must reach the clearing before dark, if possible.

"Come with me, Ai-tlo-cho," he begged. "You know the power of the white man; you have seen his magic. With me you will be safe even in the dark. The night devils will not bother you."

WITHOUT the young Mangaroma as guide Hugh never could have found his way through the forest over that maze of game-trails and footpaths. Time



and again he fell, or some invisible liana caught and held him in its coils. But at last, crawling up a steep bank, he saw the inky shadow of Ai-tlo-cho before him and heard a low hiss of warning:

"Quiet—the clearing—the men are here."

Night was settling down like a blanket, a misty darkness, that soon would hide the earth. With these words new strength seemed to flow into Hamilton's tired body, and he struggled forward to the edge of the clearing to see bright fires leaping up and tall shadows moving. Busy figures still unloading supplies for the evening meal showed that they had just arrived.

"Careful, there," he could hear the booming voice of Tono shouting. "Bring my woman up to the house."

Two shadowy men lifted the inert form from the bottom of the canoe to their shoulders and followed the bulk of Tono to the house. Soon the dull light of an oil lantern glowed within, painting the crevices of the old building a bright orange. The two *coboclos* came out, laughing and joking, to join their fellows about the cooking fires.

"I am going to that house," Hugh whispered.

"The black giant will shoot you at sight."

"I must go."

"Let me go," argued the savage youth. "I have my bow and arrow. It may be that I can shoot him through one of the cracks between the logs of the house."

"That would be useless," decided Hugh. "If you killed him, the others would take the white girl."

"Then you can do nothing."

"I go. You wait here to guide us back in case I succeed in getting the white girl. If I do not come by dawn, go back to your people. You will know that I am dead."

CHAPTER XIII

"**L**EAVE me," said Tono to the two men who carried Anita to the house. "Take with you my rifle and machete, even this pocket-knife. Leave not a stick or a stone in this hut, for no man knows what a woman will do."

In the shielding darkness Hugh walked boldly along the edge of the small clearing until he was behind the hut and then he approached more cautiously. He observed that several of the chinks between the palisade logs were wide enough for a good view of the interior, even large enough to shoot through, and he still carried the air-pistol loaded with a poisoned dart; but this kind of a gun held little promise. If he shot Tono from ambush, the poison might not be instantly effective, and the man would quickly arouse the camp.

An eye to one of the widest cracks in the wall revealed to Hugh the mighty Tono bending over the helpless girl untying the knots he dared not retain a knife to cut.

"I am going to untie you. I am going to let you up," decided Tono. "You are mine, all mine."

Tono's big fingers were unloosening the knots while the girl struggled, writhed and kicked.

"Lie still," cried Tono impatiently, "or you will feel the weight of these big hands."

"Strike hard enough to kill, Tono."

Crouching there, staring through the crevice, Hugh slowly drew the air-pistol from his pocket. But desperate though he was, Hugh could not shoot an unarmed man in the back from ambush. There must be another way, a better way, and not the way of an assassin. The air-pistol certainly looked like a real gun, anyhow. . . .

As Tono bent over the girl, chuckling and laughing, she writhed and twisted to hamper him as much as possible; and this struggle, weak and futile though it was, proved sufficient to mask Hugh's entrance as he pushed aside the

reed mat at the opening and stepped noiselessly within the lighted interior directly behind the unsuspecting Tono.

"I have tamed lots of wild women," laughed Tono, "and I can handle you without ropes. Get up," he commanded.

But she lay there, her eyes, staring past him, saw a moving form slowly disengaged from the darkness.

"Get up," commanded Tono again.

THE girl did not move; in the moving shadow she recognized Hugh—and she had believed him dead!

Tono could not see Hugh, knew nothing of his presence; but he was accustomed to danger and Anita's staring eyes, looking beyond him, ignoring him, were warning enough. Tono reared suddenly upright and whirled about.

"You!" he cried in stark surprise and something of superstitious terror. "You!"

"Stand perfectly still and very quiet," warned Hugh, over the threatening barrel of the pistol.

The sound of the white man's voice was reassuring.

"They told me you were dead," Tono growled. "What do you want here?"

"Anita."

"So you want her for yourself!" The words rattled hoarsely. "Well, you won't get her away from Tono!"

Tono had taken one desperate chance to obtain this white girl, and if necessary he would take another. His big feet shifted, and his powerful leg muscles gathered for the fatal leap. Tono's giant body had been struck with bullets before, and he lived. This was such a little gun that it could not be very dangerous.

"Run!" called Hugh to Anita. "Run for the forest—downstream—Ai-tlo-cho waits there!"

Hugh knew that the first roar of the giant's bull voice, as he charged, would bring the others. He could not hope to stop this man with an air-gun, nor avoid the conflict within the narrow confines of the room. But he could kill this black giant, as he had promised to do, before he died.

He could not wait until Tono leaped. "Take it, then," he said as he pressed the trigger. "You won't have her, either!"

The air-pistol, pointed at Tono's soft middle, where it would be most effective, emitted a *pouf*, exactly like an old cartridge missing fire, a sound perfectly familiar to the ears of any traveler in that damp country. Involuntarily Tono had braced himself to receive the shock of a bullet, but when nothing happened more than a tiny blow in the belly, he laughed—and launched himself forward before the man could fire again. Hugh, unable to reload, cast the worthless weapon in Tono's face and dodged.

"Run," he called to Anita, on her feet now. "Run."

Instead she began groping in the shadows along the wall for a stick or a stone to help him.

In that narrow room there was no escape from the black giant. The reed mats guarding the doorway, opened inwardly and could not be broken down by the weight of a man's body. Tono was determined now to kill this presumptuous and unarmed white man with his bare hands. His right paw fastened upon Hugh's upper right arm, like the grip of a gorilla, holding him helpless, threatening to tear the very flesh from the bone. He had but to haul his victim to him and snap his neck—

Instead the giant stood there as though suddenly turned to stone by some magic spell, his face a grayish green, black eyes fairly popping from their sockets.

"*Madre de Dios!*"

More a low moaning than any human voice. His big hand dropped, releasing Hugh, as he stared down at his middle and with trembling fingers plucked out a splinter of bamboo, buried almost to the cotton wadding in his thick body.

He leaped for the doorway, swaying a bit, and seemed to stumble as though his feet were already dead.

"Help!" he bawled. "Help!"

Hugh thought this was more fear and terror than any sudden action of the poison, but he did not know that the deadly chemical Sperling had used was far quicker in its action than any poison ever brewed by savage witch-doctor.

"Hugh!" he heard Anita calling.

"Quick," he answered. "Out of here—follow me—the others will be here in a minute!"

He tore down the mat covering the rear door, and they dashed outside just as Tono's men, alarmed by his hoarse cries, came running up with their rifles.

"Tono!" they called, fearing to enter until he permitted.

The only answer was a dull thud, as of some massive body falling heavily to earth.

CHAPTER XIV

EVERYTHING is gone," Anita sighed.

"Tono's men sure made a thorough job of it," admitted Hugh, as they surveyed the ruins of the plantation.

"All Gramp's wonderful work destroyed!"

"Tono destroyed the trees purposely. He knew that those new heveas would end his rubber gathering, so he burned them all up."

"Poor Gramp—he worked so hard—all for nothing."

Down by the river-bank waited a long dugout canoe, manned by Mangaroma warriors, which was to take them away from there forever.

Dead hevea trees, still in leaf, rattled their dry bones in the river breeze. The green earth was scarred with the black embers of burned buildings. There were two lonely graves on the hill where the big house had stood.

"Poor Gramp! Take me away, Hugh."

The waiting paddles dipped in the river and flashed again in the bright sun. The long canoe came to flowing life. The broad river bore them swiftly away.

"These men will take us only to the mouth of the Jaupery," explained Hugh. "They dare go no farther. But in a day or two we ought to intercept a river steamer that will take us down to Manaos."

"But Hugh," she warned, "I have no money to pay our passage by steamer. All we had was hidden away in the house, and I suppose it was stolen."

"When the river men hear what has happened, they'll be glad to help us," he explained. "We can pay them when we get to Manaos."

"No, Hugh, I have no money at Manaos. Our work here was financed by others. They have lost all. I can't even pay you the wages due."

"I have been overpaid," he answered. "To be with you is all I ask."

Not until they reached the frontier city of Manaos, several days later, did Anita discover that Hugh Hamilton was no ordinary adventurer. For much to her surprise, when he walked up into the town, every door was open to him, and almost every important personage a friend. As by magic his empty pockets were filled with gold, and every comfort and luxury of the town was his for the asking. Dr. Alvin Lee Prody, a resident American, hastened to extend the hospitality of his home.

"Why, Hammie," he greeted Hugh, "to imagine finding you here! By a miracle of good fortune, the river cable to Para is working today. Go and use it before it breaks again. Your family has given you up for dead."

As Hugh disappeared in the cable office, Dr. Prody turned to Anita with his questions.

"Where did you find him?"

"Why, Hugh has been working for us up at the plantation for a long time," puzzled. "Hugh is a good worker."

"Well, for one who never had any experience, that certainly shows resourcefulness and ingenuity!"

"And we always found him a gentleman."

"Always is right!" boomed the jovial doctor. "He was born a gentleman, educated a gentleman and always has lived like a gentleman—until he got lost in the Amazon wilderness."

"He never told me anything!" astonished.

"Just like him."

"When we found him, he looked like a tramp."

Then, to her bewilderment, the good doctor explained briefly that Hugh Hamilton was a well-known and wealthy American sportsman who had hunted big game over much of the world. He had gone to the highlands of the south, in the Matto Grosso country, to organize a hunting expedition down the Madeira River by canoe to the Amazon and thence by river steamer to Para and so home. Soon thereafter he disappeared entirely and no trace of him could be found. It was learned that his men had deserted him, fearing the savages and the wilderness, stealing the boats and supplies, leaving him alone, unarmed and afoot in the wilds of the Amazon headwaters.

That night Hugh related his astounding adventures to Dr. Prody, whom he had known back in the States in his college days, and Anita learned the rest of his story of those long months of struggle to survive. Desperate, nearly starved, ready to die, he finally struck the Ituzy branch of the Puru. There he found the tracks of wild men. He determined to find their village. It made little difference whether they killed him or not. Without their help he would die anyway. So he boldly approached their village and with the aid of a few simple parlor-magic tricks succeeded in making friends with them. For weeks he lived there, recovering from fever and lack of nourishment, learning their language. When he was strong enough they gave him a small canoe in which he worked his way downstream to Manaos after many hardships and adventures.

"Oh, Hugh," Anita accused, "why didn't you tell us?"

"Because I wanted you to like me first as a man," he explained, "and not influenced by things back home. - I've had too much of that."

THE yellow waters of the world's greatest river plunged far out into the green ocean. The narrow dark line that was the edge of a great continent grew thinner and then finally vanished altogether in the tropic haze shrouding the low horizon as the steamer plowed steadily northward, bearing the two young adventurers homeward.

"Chulla-Chaquicuna, the Inca God of the Forest, saved you for me out of all the wreck," sighed Anita.

Her small brown hand on the deck-rail was covered gently with his own in all sympathy.

"When I first saw you standing on the dock at Manaos," said he, "I knew then why I had come so far and fought so hard to live. That which I had been seeking so long was found."

"And when I first saw you," she smiled, "I thought you were a vagabond!"

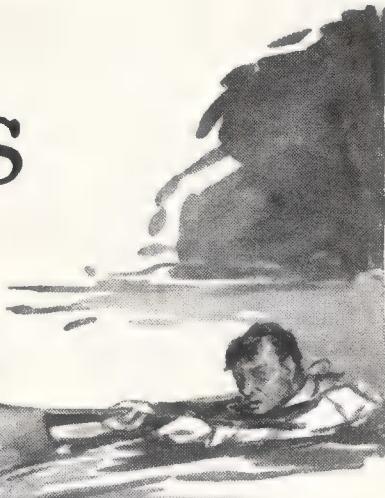
"Your lover—in disguise!"

"I remember saying some very harsh and uncomplimentary things about you at the time," she confessed. "I am glad now that I spoke in an undertone so you could not understand."

"That was the very reason why I suddenly decided to go with you," he laughed. "I overheard every word."

"Hugh, I'll never get to know you!"

REAL EXPERIENCES



A Texan here gives you the vivid story of his bad quarter of an hour with a Brahma bull—"the fightin'-est breed of cattle" extant, it is said.

Towed by a Brahma

By W. W. Graves

I ABHOR Brahma cattle; my dislike for this particular breed dates back about ten years, to an afternoon when I went fishing on the Little Wichita River about five miles from my home ranch. My favorite fishing-hole was located on the McFaddin ranch, which ran a herd of about fifty Brahma cattle; among them were two bulls.

As I entered the McFaddin ranch, I met the foreman. I told him I expected to eat trout for supper.

He smiled and said, "Maybe!"

"Why, aint they biting?" I asked.

"They might,"—he grinned,—“if those blasted Brahma bulls couldn't see, hear, or smell. They are the fightin'est cattle this side of hell! Old Monarch,” he went on, “that's the boss' big imported bull, can outrun a horse, and will fight anything from a jackrabbit to a circle saw. He will run you all day. Fish on horseback, if you must fish!”

“He must be a fire-eater,” I said. “But I'll give him the slip.” And I loped on down to the Wichita.

The place I had selected on the river was at the bend. The side from which I had decided to fish was a bank about eight feet above the water and extending several hundred yards both above and below the bend. The other side was a sea of sand. I made my first cast from this bank, and was soon rewarded by a vigorous strike. Whether it was a trout or not I never learned—for at this moment I heard the low, mad growl of an angry bull.

“Old Monarch is coming,” I thought.

Yes, he was coming at a fast trot, his head lowered.

I looked for my horse but he was at least a hundred yards distant up the river. Then my eyes fell upon a mesquite sapling on the edge of the bank a few feet from where I stood. I decided to use this sapling for a hand-hold, and swing down the bank. I hesitated a moment, glancing about for the bull; the next was too late. The first thing I knew, I was in the water up to my shoulders, with clods of earth and limbs from the mesquite, combined with

the river, almost burying me, while near by the old bull was slashing, kicking and sputtering, trying to get his head free from the brush of the tree.

When the water had cleared from my eyes, and the clods had quit falling I saw the old bull kick free from the brush and swim to the sandy shore. I found myself in water about five feet deep. I still had my hat, and I felt my boots and chaps a heavy weight about me. My spurs felt as if they were hung in the roots and clods on the bottom of the stream. I freed my feet and clambered upon a big pile of clods that had caved from above. I decided to wait here until the bull gave up the chase and went to join the herd before I attempted to climb the bank.

But I was not permitted to wait long, for the old bull with bloodshot eyes located my resting-place. When he noticed me, he once more began his low growl.

I looked at the bank at my back. It was at least eight feet high, with not a hand-hold in sight, and with my wet boots and chaps I was weighted down so escape was impossible. Even if I could scale the bank, I might fall an easy victim to the other bull which I now heard approaching. No, I would stay; this old rascal would never enter the water where he would have to swim!

But even as I was thinking this, the old bull with an unearthly roar bounded into the water. As he drew near I decided to dive, and planted my feet firmly on the clods; then I dismissed the idea of diving as my boots were too heavy for me to make much speed. The old bull had now reached water that ran well over his back; he was swimming. He would be compelled to swim at least thirty feet.

While he was approaching, I fell upon a plan—I decided to jump behind him, grab his tail, let him drag me and in this way worry him down. I made the lunge and seized his tail all right.

What is the most extraordinary thing that ever happened to you? In the following pages, five of your fellow-readers recount their most remarkable experiences. On page 136 are given in full the conditions under which prizes are awarded for these stories of real life.

He made a quick whirl and rushed for shallow water. Then I realized the danger of letting him drag me into very shallow water, even with the "tail-holt." I might get shaken loose, and then I could not escape him. I quit him just as he began to wade rather than swim.

When I was again on the pile of clods, which were fast crumbling from the moisture, I saw the old bull lunge into the water with cries and bawls even more hideous than before. When he got to the deep water, he almost walked upon his hind legs. When he was about ready to rear up and take me off of the clods I made a long jump, again got the "tail-holt" and let him drag me to the shallow water. I then returned to my almost submerged clods.

But my foot-hold was almost gone. I thought: "I am a goner now—I can't jump far enough."

The old bull seemed more impatient each time I eluded him. He charged into the water for the third round. I reasoned that he would eventually get a break and cripple me, so I decided to change my tactics. I would ride him! When he approached the third time I grabbed his tail and gradually worked upon his back. I held his tail over my shoulder for a brace, while the hump on his withers served well to keep me in the middle of his back as he bawled and tossed his head wildly, trying to unseat me.

The old bull headed up the river; every once in a while he would loll out his tongue, lunge a few steps forward, and then stop right quick. At last he came to a glade where scrubby willows grew. Here he stopped to horn the shrubbery. He knelt down, wallowed his head in the sand and proceeded to twist the willows with his horns, giving vent to the most unearthly roarings.

I still clung to his tail for a brace to keep me from falling forward, for that would mean death from his hoofs.

After he had decided that he could not twist all the willows of the glade into pieces, he made for a range beyond the river, where he heard another bull.

Here I saw scrubby mesquites growing, and the idea struck me that I might swing from the old fellow's back to an overhanging limb. As I was weighing my chance for such escape, I heard the angry growl of the other bull. I raised my eyes and saw a big red Hereford bull coming at a rapid rate. Disaster now stared me in the face. I made up my mind to run for it, for in a few minutes the air would be full of tossing horns and mangling hoofs.

At this point old Monarch was craving action; he lowered his mighty spread of horns, worked them in the grass and dirt, and then rose almost on his hind legs, giving vent to a continuous battle-cry. The Hereford bull, now not thirty yards distant, was replying in kind.

At a short distance, almost in direct line of combat I saw one strong mesquite tree. I made up my mind to risk a run for that tree. While planning my run, I had failed for a moment to watch the oncoming bull. I looked for the Hereford; while searching the mesquites for his white face, a tree limb struck my hat. I grabbed the limb, some two feet above me. Too low, but I must take a chance.

I drew my heavy boots from old Monarch's back, and liberated my spurs; just then the other bull, the Hereford, hit him on the side of the neck, with all the force that two thousand pounds of weight could muster.

It was a royal battle! The Hereford backed and pushed old Monarch now this way and now that. The fight waxed hotter until I thought all the trees within a radius of a hundred yards would be uprooted. When the battle was going much against old Monarch, and he had backed at least fifty yards from the tree in which I sat, I thought this might be a good time for me to leave the tree. I cast my gaze about and saw my pony grazing about fifty yards away. He came at my call; I dragged myself from the tree, slung into the saddle, and made for home.

Mistaken Identity

A surveyor in northern Michigan is bombarded and made captive by a trapper conducting a private war against the game wardens.

By **Charles S. Dailey**

IT all happened while I was working with a Government survey party on one of the rivers in northern Michigan. We had started at the mouth and were working upstream. At the time of my adventure we were about seventy-five miles inland in a wild, rugged country. The only inhabitants were a few scattered hunters and trappers; and these were all a rather hard lot, with little respect for either the law or its enforcers. Their enmity was especially turned toward the game wardens, whom they considered rank intruders; and it was a common saying that there was no closed season on them. The story was told that one man, on getting appointed to a warden's job, immediately moved out of the State and stayed out until he was relieved of his duties.

At this time we were camped at a fork in the river, and were living in an old abandoned lumber-camp. Our nearest neighbor was a trapper by the name of Pierce, who lived about a mile away, but who used to drop in once in a while of an evening and smoke our tobacco.

On this day I speak of we were working up the smaller of the two branches of the river, and at noon were about ten miles from camp. We had a small flat-bottomed boat, which we used for crossing and working along the water's edge; it had an outboard motor for power. As we were going to start in on the main river again the next day, it was up to one of us to take the boat back to camp while the rest went back in the truck, following an old logging road. About two o'clock the boss told me I might as well take the boat in, and as it got dark early, I had better start right away.

So after warming up well and cursing myself for being the unlucky one, for it was plenty cold, and the wind cut like a knife,—as those winds that blow off Lake Superior will,—I shoved off. The water was shallow, and I had to be continually on the lookout for snags and submerged rocks. Everything went fine for the first hour, though I had covered only about one-third the distance, for my craft was no speedster by any means. I was stamping my feet and trying to keep warm by thinking of the warm camp ahead, when there was a jar, and the motor started to race madly.

I knew right away that I'd hit a sunken log or some other obstacle, and had broken the propeller. The only thing left for me to do was to pull the motor in and row the rest of the way. So after lighting my pipe, I started on my long pull. The current was with me, and the exercise helped to keep me warm. I knew, though, that it would be way after dark when I reached camp, and I wondered if the rest of the boys would start out to meet me with a light, for if nothing had gone wrong, I would



have been in before they arrived. I must have rowed nearly a mile, when suddenly there was a shot from the right bank, and I felt a jar as the bullet tore through the boat's side. Only the thought of that icy water kept me from leaping overboard; instead I dropped flat on the bottom—only to have another bullet tear through the side close to my head, and throw splinters of ice and wood in my face.

I had no idea who my adversary was, or why, but I did know he was a good marksman—too good to suit me right then! I made up my mind to try and get overboard anyway, cold or no cold, for at that it was better than being the target for some madman with a high-powered rifle. But just as I was starting to ease myself over the side, there was a shout from the bank, and a surly voice told me to row ashore and not try anything if I wanted to stay whole.

It didn't take me long to do as I was ordered, for I had no desire to argue. As the bow of the boat grated on the bank, I was told to get out and keep my hands high. This I did at once, and as I turned, I got my first look at the man. He looked pretty much the same sort as most of the trappers of the district. I kept wondering why he had made this attack on me, for all the others of his kind we had met had been friendly enough. He soon explained by his next words:

"So you blank-blank wardens are even sneaking around in boats now, huh?"

That solved it all: not knowing we were working in the territory, and looking on any stranger with suspicion, he had jumped to the conclusion that I was a game warden; for at that time no man, no matter how brave, ever wore a warden's uniform in that country.

"Sorry, old scout, but I am no warden," I said quickly, "—just one of the survey gang working on the river, and we're living down to the forks in the old lumber-camp."

Even as I spoke, I could see it was of no avail, for he had made up his mind what I was and there was no convincing him otherwise. I was also wondering why he had not killed me outright, for it would have saved him this trouble and it wouldn't be the first time such a thing had happened around there, either. Seeing arguing was useless and only made him more ugly, I shut up, fearing he might change his mind and finish me right there.

After hesitating a moment he walked over to the boat and smashed a good-sized hole in it with his belt-ax, then shoved it out into the stream. Then, turning to me, he told me to march ahead of him, following a trail through the woods.

We went along this way for nearly a mile, neither of

us saying a word; abruptly we came out in a small clearing in the center of which was a little cabin. Keeping a close watch on me, he opened the door and motioned me inside. The interior was rough and contained a bunk, a rough table and a stove. A box cupboard hung on the wall. The only light was through one small window.

After stirring the fire and shoving the coffee-pot forward, he came and sat down opposite me. Looking me over for a few seconds he said:

"You're a warden and there's no use denying it. Now I've got a friend who's being held for some fool thing by a warden up the line a way. The reason I didn't kill you with my first shot is that I want you to get my friend out. If you don't do that, I'll hold you till they do; and if that doesn't work—well, by God, I feel sorry for you!"

I tried again to convince him that he was all wrong and that holding me would do no good—it would only get him into trouble and not help his friend in the least. But to no avail; he felt I was trying to lie myself free and the sooner I made up my mind to come to terms, the better it would be for me. So I settled back and kept still, trying to think of some plan of escape, although the outlook didn't look very bright. Besides, it was late and I was afraid that the rest of the boys on not finding me at camp would start out to look for me; they would be sure to run across our tracks, and if they ever came up to the cabin I knew there would be more trouble and plenty of it.

Suddenly we heard the sound of some one approaching. My heart was in my mouth as my captor motioned me to keep quiet. He went to the door, rifle in hand, opening it just enough to see out. He watched there a minute, then opened it wide and stepped out, at the same time keeping an eye on me.

I could hear him talking to some one. I tried hard to understand what was being said, but they kept their voices low. In a few minutes my captor reentered the room, followed by the newcomer. Imagine my surprise and relief when I saw that the man was none other than our camp neighbor, Pierce. At that I think he was as much surprised as I was for the moment. Then he started to laugh. Though I suppose it was funny, I couldn't see it that way at all. There are lots of things more amusing than being shot at by some half-wild trapper, and then held prisoner!

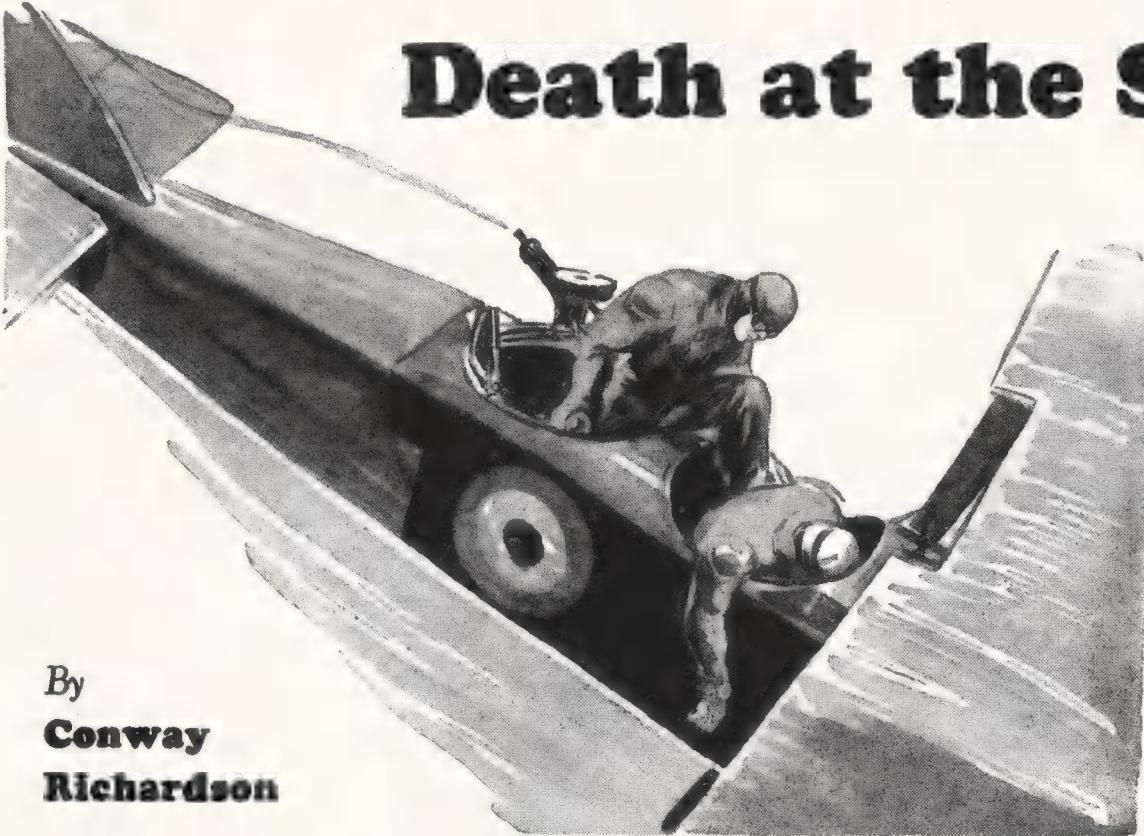
In the meantime our host was looking at us both with a puzzled frown on his face. We all started to talk at once. Finally Pierce explained it all to the other, and I will always believe there was a look of disappointment on his face when he found out that he would have to let me go. Of one thing I am sure, there was no regret for the trouble and scare he had given me.

After assuring my late captor that I'd forget the whole thing, I hurriedly left. And I was one happy guy to get out of there, believe me!

I met the other boys about a mile down the river where they had found the boat stuck in some snags along the shore. I guess they all thought they were seeing a ghost when I walked up, by the looks on their faces. After giving them the details of my adventure, we decided to come and get the boat in the morning, so we struck out for camp.

We worked in that territory all the rest of the winter without any more serious trouble, but, just the same, I was mighty glad when we packed up and left for good. Even now I shudder when I think of what the outcome might have been if Pierce hadn't happened along when he did, or if the rest of the boys had come up to the cabin.

Death at the Stick



By
**Conway
Richardson**

A war-time aviator tells how it feels to be six thousand feet up over the battle lines after one's pilot has been killed.

EVER ask a man who's been in the big fuss whether he was scared? Well, here's one "peelot" who's been scared, plenty! And when I start thinking of this particular hop I took, I almost get scared all over again! It's hard to believe now, but I'll vouch for the truth of the story, for it happened to me and I know the log of the First Observation Squadron, R.F.C., would authenticate my statements.

It happened just about the time I was logging my third hundred hours in the air. On this particular June morning I'd washed out my crate and was assigned as an observer until I could get another plane. Planes were sort of scarce in those days.

I was told to fly with a chap named Ross. A good egg, Ross, and a gentleman. Nothing in the air ever troubled him—and he was flying a D. H. Remember the "Observer's Lament," that poem written by a chap who flew *obso* in a D. H.? It's got a line in it that goes something like this: "*You don't need a hearse when you ride in a D. H.*" Few people can realize the sheer truth contained in that statement!

As we made ready to take off, Ross turned to me and shouted:

"Well, fella, feel like coming back this trip?"

I explained, shortly, but definitely, my intentions of getting back, whole of body and mind, then turned my attention to the Lewises which were cradled on the scarf mount.

It was about the time the second battle of Ypres was being fought. Loos and Looge, just outside of old "Wipers," were a veritable shambles. Planes flying over every day dropping loads of bombs—long-distance guns sending high explosives into them. Those towns certainly were not livable; yet men were in them. And we were to photograph the sector.

We flew for about twenty minutes. Shorty Ross' head was bent over the map in his cockpit, and I was nursing the camera along. Five or ten minutes more, I figured, and then we could head for home and breakfast. But I didn't know, then—

Shorty threw the crate into a sideslip, sliding down the air-lanes for a hundred feet. Instantly I left the camera on its own, and turned to the Lewises, swinging them into position for instant action.

Then I took a look around.

About three hundred feet above us two Albatrosses were riding down after us. Visions of home and breakfast disappeared fast—and I peered intently along the sights, waiting. . . .

Shorty didn't lose much time getting away from there and grabbing some altitude. He was that way always—wanted plenty of room to do his fighting or his running. He never hesitated, either way. If his observer was in a jam, Shorty ran. You couldn't help but like him for it. Few pilots ever paid any attention to their observers. Few of them ever ran.

Evidently he felt that I was O. K. this trip, and he stayed with it. We managed to get about a thousand feet on them in a running fight while I kept my Lewises swinging back and forth. One of the Jerrys got in a bit close and let me have a few bursts, but God was with me. . . . I squeezed the Lewises and prayed.

A shattered prop, a wisp of smoke curling from out of his bonnet and Jerry was *hors de combat*. Shorty must have sensed that one knockdown, for he throttled his engine and shouted:

"Pretty, Bobby! Give it to 'em!"

A shadow fell over the fuselage. I looked up. Iron crosses on a blood-red surface—more Jerrys! I sweated then. I knew I could handle the remaining Albatross; but when the reinforcements came up, I started humming the "Observer's Lament" again.

I swung about to warn Ross of the newcomers above us, but he had seen. We slipped off and away. And then—it happened. I watched, agonized, as a stream of tracer smoke shot past me. . . . Ross' body quivered with the impact of the steel.

I was blinded with a red, choking rage. I don't know how long I stood in that cockpit, squeezing the triggers on those two bucking, stuttering guns. The skies were going

mad around me, but I felt nothing, realized nothing, until the empty pans snapped me out of it. It was then that I realized my own plight.

I was riding the sky-lanes at approximately six thousand feet, in the rear cockpit of a D. H.—with a dead pilot at the stick!

I braced myself as the D. H. floundered about helplessly. The throttle was three-quarters closed. I remember offering a mental prayer of thanks for the fact that the motor was not gunned wide open. Nevertheless the situation was perilous—and I knew it. There wasn't a shadow of doubt as to what was going to happen.

A second—two more. . . . The nose would come over; the tail would come up; and the crate would go spinning six thousand feet to eternity. . . . I jerked up as an Albatross whirled past. The pilot must have seen or sensed the situation, for he circled back and waved a sympathetic hand. Good sport!

The coffin lurched again—a flat spin. Sickeningly slow at first, that spin. I didn't dare think any further. Carefully I unstrapped my belt. The Lewis guns were in my way. I lifted them off, threw them overside. I had one chance—and I was going to take it.

I lifted myself out of the cockpit. The ship was almost vertical now—sliding down the skies at a terrific speed. My shifting weight made the spin faster. A roaring motor sounded close beside me, but I didn't care. Tightening my grip, I grimly resolved to make it into that front cockpit, shut that throttle and gain control of this dizzy, spinning ship.

Slowly—oh, so slowly, I crept down. . . . The other cockpit was within reach now. . . . There was Shorty's body, his head lolling loosely on his shoulders. I shut my

eyes, reached for the Sam Browne—made it—and held on desperately.

It was agonizing, that job! The wind tore at me; the centrifugal force of the ship's spin was tossing me—now against the fuselage, now away from it.

I reached the throttle-bar, closed it. . . . But by this time the maneuver had little effect. I hung on a minute more, then slid into the cockpit—right into Ross' lifeless lap.

I moaned a prayer aloud. Then I turned to the task of pulling her out of the spin. I glanced at the altimeter—eight hundred feet, and falling—*fast!* Slowly, easily, I pulled that stick over, kicked the rudder over, *hard*, then gunned her.

But it was too late for that.

There was a field artillery battery close by; I just sensed that from the dim hazy figures running about. I couldn't see where the crate was headed for. I didn't care much. I was going to soften the shock, anyhow.

There was a screech of rending fabric—snapping wires. A dull sound next that seemed to erase every other sound from the world. . . .

We had struck.

A grinding pain in my left hip, a wrench as if some powerful something were trying to take the whole leg away from my body—then darkness. A base hospital for four weeks—and a limp I have yet.

I lived to see three hundred more hours of combat flying logged in my book. Never again did I experience that helpless, all-gone feeling which came to me as I realized that I was alone in a D. H., with Death itself riding the stick—and that stick in the *other* cockpit.

Scared? Lord, yes!

Caught in the Log-Jam

A Quebec lumberman tackled a log-jam, found himself trapped between two logs—and the jam started to move.

By Gaspard England



FOR years, work on river drives had taught me many lessons; chief among them was never to trust Mother Nature—she is the most fickle and unreliable of gods, and just when you least expect it, she up and slaps you one!

During my first nine years, I had been very lucky; I got clear with only a broken leg and a few forced wettings—and all in all I had had more than the usual amount of luck, which lulled me into a feeling of security and overconfidence.

But the tenth spring saw an unusual amount of rain, and the Big Horton River was a rushing, foaming mass of yellowish water—especially at Morrow Rapids.

Morrow Rapids started below, just where the waters of Pike Brook joined the Big Horton. Although we were hardened river-men, Morrow Rapids always gave us a thrill when we had to work on them. They were a mile long, with high banks on each side—a more downward trend than usual.

The river-bed at this point was dotted with huge boul-

ders, and just now these were covered with foaming, frothing water.

This season everything went fine for the first few days, except for a few small jams that gave us no trouble; my crew of ten men guarding the rapids had an unusually easy time.

Then one afternoon about three o'clock, with a cold drizzle falling, that immediately turned to ice, we were huddled under a branch shelter out of the storm, when a point guard arrived on the run, saying that a considerable jam was forming at Martin's Bog.

Martin's Bog was halfway down the stretch of rapids, and was so called because the river was slightly wider at this point, causing the water to eddy and swirl around three large boulders in the center of the river.

ARRIVING at Martin's Bog, we were surprised to see that the jam was larger than we had expected—fully three hundred yards long, and at some places fifteen to thirty feet high, with logs standing on end in every position possible, like a keg of nails. Other logs were continually coming downstream, and increasing the pressure from behind.

As I was the boss of course it was my duty to take first look, to ascertain the whereabouts of the key log, to examine the whole front of the jam for possible danger and for the best way for my crew to escape when the jam should be started.

Grasping my peavy with both hands, I leaped from log to log, across that trembling, shuddering mass of timber, on down the front of the jam until I had reached the water's edge in the middle of the river.

In a few moments I had discovered the key logs. Two logs riding side by side, had bumped head-on into the center boulder. The other ends swinging, one on each side, on into the bank, had soon formed an impassable barrier. Other logs slid under and over the keys, and like a snowball in wet weather, gained in proportion as time passed.

After a quick examination, I decided that the break would have to come from the center, where the rush of water was the strongest, as the shore logs were well embedded in the ground, and would be held even more solidly as the weight increased.

Taking a last look around, I started for the shore to rejoin my men and instruct them as to the whereabouts of the weak spot, intending then to descend to a point slightly below the jam, and continue my instructions from there.

Just as I straightened, preparatory to leaping up the face of the jam, the bark under my calked boots suddenly gave way; my right foot slipped in between two logs that laid side by side, and like a wedge, my body forced the foot through the narrow space.

Quickly I dropped my peavy and tried to extricate my foot. But try as I would, I could not get my imprisoned foot released.

My men, seeing my plight, came leaping over the jam to my rescue. Slipping peavies between the two logs, they tried to pry them apart sufficiently to allow my foot to be released, but it was to no avail—the enormous weight that lay on the ends of the logs made it humanly impossible to get the least give.

SEEING that I was unable to get clear that way, I unlaced my heavy boot but was unable to get it off. My leg was held as in a vise, and the leather would not slip between the log and my leg, which began to pain with the pressure.

There was only one thing to do, that was to take an

ax and try to hack away enough wood from the logs around my leg and allow space.

But this procedure was dangerous and tedious and minutes were precious.

In the meantime the pressure was increasing on the tail of the jam, and the rasping of heavy timber could be plainly heard. Occasionally a log would be used as a lever by the heavy weight of others, and would spring up in the air, scattering several more. One such log missed my head barely by inches.

ONE of the men started nicking the wood around my leg with the corner of the ax, as the whole blade could not be used.

Suddenly a shout from one of the men brought consternation and fear:

"She's moving!"

The tremendous pressure from behind was beginning to tell; the front of the jam was working and packing. But the big boulder that held the key logs was sliding! Would I be released in time?

My men, realizing my danger even more fully than I did, redoubled their efforts; the ax bit into my boots, my socks were split in several places, and the pain in my leg was scarcely忍耐able.

Should the jam break before my release, it meant certain death—crushed and pounded beneath that mass of tumbling timber and rushing water, life would be snuffed out in a minute, and my broken and battered body would probably never be found.

Though I knew I was in peril, I had no fear of death, and coolly gave instructions to my half-frantic men with no more concern than if I had been standing on the riverbank.

Glancing again at the boulder, I noticed that it was still slipping—only about a foot of each key log held, and the boulder was being steadily pushed forward; in no time now the key logs would slip free, and instead of a solid log jam, the river would be filled with crushing, tumbling timber.

Only six inches left. Would it hold until the men had completed their task?

The front of the jam was rising steadily and irresistibly—the logs were shoving and pushing. The key logs were bent nearly double with the pressure! The men worked with frantic haste. Three inches of wood on the lower side of the log still remained to be cut away.

MY eyes remained glued to the key logs. Two inches still held now—two inches of slipping timber between life and death!

At last my men gave a triumphant shout. My leg was released from the treacherous vise; but it was crushed and useless.

Lifting me as if I were a bag of oats, the men started to scramble madly up the face of the jam. Suddenly, when we were within five yards of the shore, the jam broke with a loud crack like a pistol-shot.

The whole bottom seemed to disappear like magic from beneath us.

How the last five yards of safety were negotiated, I have not the faintest idea. Logs were abruptly shot in the air by the pressure from beneath, and one, swinging around like a flailing stick, caught one of my men in the back, hurling him senseless some twenty-five feet away on the bank.

At last safety was reached, and as I glanced in the direction of the river and full realization came to me for the first time of the danger which I had been in—I promptly fainted.

Into the Old Shaft

Down in Indiana a 'coon-hunter stumbled into an old mine-shaft, landed far below in the deep water of the sump—and was three days getting out.

By John H. Jollief

GUIDED by the quick, sharp barks of the hound only a few rods ahead, I hurried through the blanket of fog, though a score of low-hanging branches whipped me in the face, and my feet slipped and slid on the crust of snow and ice. As I stumbled into and out of jagged holes left from dynamiting stumps, the flickering, sputtering kerosene lantern in my left hand cast jumping rays of pale yellow light a bare ten feet, making rapid progress practically impossible. The old, dependable rifle in my right hand was becoming a trifle burdensome, while the short-handled ax at my belt pulled me down like the proverbial millstone. Clothed as I was for protection against extremely cold weather my warm thick woolen sweater, leather coat, heavy felt boots, and fur cap greatly hindered my movements and taxed my power of running endurance.

Old Ponto had been yelping most furiously for at least five minutes, while I crashed my way through the brush in an effort to reach him as quickly as possible. I could tell from the commotion which I could now hear, that he had treed on the ground, perhaps blocking a 'coon's last frantic dash toward a protecting tree, or preventing a valuable short-stripe from dodging into a sheltering den.

"Stay with him, Ponto!" I yelled encouragingly.

As I spoke, I unluckily stepped into an unnoticed hole, and the next instant sprawled my full length on the frozen ground. Instinctively I clung to my rifle, but my lantern, the thing I needed the most, went flying out of my hand, and crashed against a big beech tree. I heard the glass chimney shatter, and the lantern-frame go tumbling.

Without the lantern, I now had to depend upon my flashlight. I got up as quickly as I could, and reached for the precious cylinder. It was not there! I dived into every pocket of my clothing—but not a sign of a flashlight. Then its whereabouts flashed into my mind—I had left it lying on the incubator in the cellar at home! Such luck—just when I needed it the most, too!

Ponto was still barking but with an occasional lull which probably indicated a moment of real fighting.

I was compelled to move more slowly and more cautiously now. I gradually acquired confidence as I felt my way through the brush, practically a step at a time. Then I moved faster and faster. I had gone perhaps twenty yards when an open space, apparently free from timber, loomed up before me. I broke into an easy trot, expecting to reach the scene of battle at any instant.

Without the slightest warning—until it was too late—as I leaped over a fallen timber (evidently placed there



as a warning and as a protection to livestock), my body slid rapidly down a sharp embankment, feet first; there was a momentary scratching of small brush and weeds about my perspiring face, and then—horror of horrors!—utter blackness and a sensation of falling which brought a sickening feeling to my stomach, and jerked my heart clear into the roof of my parched mouth. I had fallen into the old mine, deserted for the past four years!

Down I dropped, still clutching my rifle, in a shaft as dark as any dungeon—to an unknown landing.

Naturally I thought my time had come. I fully expected during those few seconds of terrible suspense to be dashed to a pulp on the timbers and coal far below; it seemed inevitable.

Many times I had dropped chunks of coal into the pit, counted the number of seconds to the landing, and estimated the depth to be approximately sixty feet.

I had never fallen from a great height before. Of course there had been times when I had fallen seemingly a considerable distance, but in each instance I had been saved from a terrible death by a substantial feather-bed! However, this was no dream—and most assuredly there would be no feather-bed at the bottom for me to fall on.

Splash! Whooooo! Gee, that water was cold!

I went clear to the bottom, through five feet of cold water, bumped against a solid substance of some sort, then started back up again. When I stopped, the water level was at my chin.

I was not dead; to the contrary, I was very much alive—and instinctively I started to get out. I was wet to the skin. The rifle was still firmly gripped in my right hand. The cold water served as an excellent stimulant, though I cannot say that I needed a stimulant of any kind right then. I moved slowly straight ahead; my free hand touched something wet and clammy but solid, something substantial to cling to. I tested it slightly, found it would hold my weight, climbed upon it, and sat down.

Oh, for a light! No lantern, no flashlight, nothing but wet matches and—pitch-black darkness!

Then I began to wonder. How had I happened to leap into the old mine? I knew every square foot of that neighborhood. I had been born less than a half mile from the mine. I had spent my entire life in that immediate vicin-

ity. I had hunted that territory day and night in season for everything one could expect to find in a woods.

The only explanation I could give then or cite now is that I forgot my location in the excitement of the chase, and the fog caused me to lose my bearings.

Using the rifle as a feeler, I discovered an opening about four feet to my right. I slid cautiously along the timber, felt around with my feet, found solid footing, and then stepped out into an open space. I found the wall of coal some ten feet to my right. I took particular pains to keep from again falling into the sump. Slowly and carefully I explored, going back and forth, until I knew that I was in a room at least thirty feet wide, with the sump at one side, and an indefinite extension into the mine on the other. The roof was only three or four feet above my head. Undoubtedly I was in the main entry.

The floor was comparatively dry. My now useless rifle I placed on the floor parallel to the sump, but about three feet back, so that when I came upon it I would know the location of the water-hole.

I did the one thing which I could do to improve my miserable condition. I removed each garment, wrung and twisted out as much water as I could, then put it back on again. It was a disagreeable sensation replacing those damp garments, but I had no alternative. There was a badly bruised spot on my left leg.

I took stock of my condition. Alone, more than sixty feet underground, my home folks probably worrying over my absence, unable to get out or communicate with anyone, wet, cold, tired, hungry, a prisoner in a dungeon, swallowed up by the earth—I was worse off than Jonah inside the whale! He was spewed forth upon dry land at the end of three days and three nights, but I could not hope for anything like that.

My grandfather had operated a slope mine, which I had been in two or three times, consequently I was not a total stranger to mine layouts. I decided to do some more exploring.

I moved carefully along a side wall—miners call it a *rib*—when I came to a narrow passageway which seemed to follow an arc. It was about fifty or sixty feet in length, and brought me in a few minutes to the opposite side of the mine, just across the sump from my rifle. Retracing my steps, I soon came to my starting-point.

I started out the entry. I had not gone far when I made an important discovery. The air was unfit to breathe!

There was no way out except up the shaft. How could I ever scale those perpendicular walls?

Sleep was beginning to cast its spell over me, but I warded it off, hoping my clothing would soon dry. I hummed a score of tunes, sang a dozen songs through to the end stanza by stanza, repeated the multiplication-tables from two to twelve just as I had memorized them at school, quoted poetry, Bible verses, and important dates in American history, named every letter in the alphabet forward and backward a score of times—in fact, I did any-

thing and everything I could think of to ward off sleep. After a few hours I moved over to the rib, selected a fairly comfortable place to sit down, and kept talking until at last sleep overpowered me. I slept for some hours and felt refreshed when I finally wakened.

Aside from a constant *drip-drip-drip* of water into the sump there were no sounds—unless I made them myself—and time passed slowly. My watch had stopped. It had been approximately ten o'clock on Wednesday night when I dropped into the shaft. Life now was only a continuous round of weary waiting, then sleep, then more waiting. I began to wonder how long I could hold out.

Why was I not being rescued? I moistened my mouth often, but I could not yet drink the sump water—though I knew I later would.

I reasoned that men would not dig a shaft without providing some means of exit in case of necessity. Surely there was a means of exit in conjunction with the main shaft, and I determined to find it.

I spent at least four hours collecting enough timbers of various kinds to construct a bridge across the sump. I did not care to fall into the water again.

IN the middle of the sump were several heavy timbers forming a partition. Though I explored both sides all the way around at least ten times I found nothing there, other than a cold clammy plank wall.

I sat down, weary and almost exhausted, at the edge of the sump with my back against the rib. My case seemed hopeless. I was like a wild animal, caught in a pit.

In a few minutes I could feel moisture soaking through my clothing. That was strange, for prior to that time I had found the rib everywhere dry.

With frantic haste I investigated, and discovered boards—an opening! Tearing away the heavy boards, I found I was in a small shaft which seemed to lie parallel to the main shaft. Feeling my way around the rectangular space, I concluded it was a ventilating shaft.

Then my hands gripped something familiar. A ladder! As high as I could reach, the rungs extended upward. I was so overjoyed I cried.

When I had calmed myself I took a piece of twine from my pocket,—I happened to have three or four pieces there from fodder-shocks,—tied the rifle to my back, and started up the ladder.

Daylight was breaking as I reached the top rung. With surprise I saw the ground was covered with a foot of snow.

I was an hour reaching home. There I discovered it was seven o'clock Saturday morning. Every man in the neighborhood had been searching for me since early Thursday morning. The heavy snow had come Wednesday night, completely obliterating my tracks. Everyone had given me credit for knowing enough to keep out of the mine—undeserved credit, quite evidently.

An extra large 'coon-hide was on the stretching-board; Ponto had won! I was glad—I had won too!

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